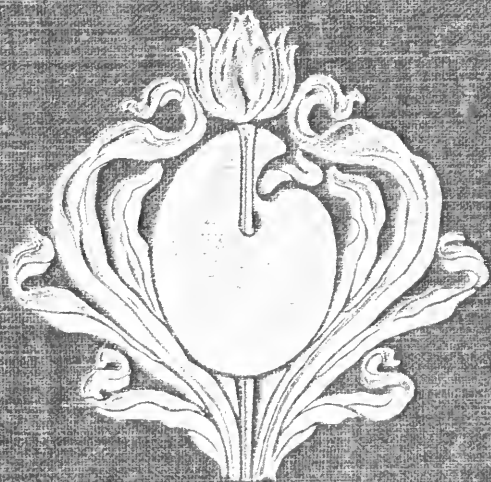


REMBRANDT

WALTER CRANSTON LARNED





152

Lucy R. Cole

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REMBRANDT

A ROMANCE OF HOLLAND



REMBRANDT

REMBRANDT

A ROMANCE OF HOLLAND

BY

WALTER CRANSTON LARNED

ILLUSTRATED

NEW YORK

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1899

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THIS BOOK
TO
MY WIFE
THE INSPIRATION OF MY WORK
AND OF MY LIFE



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REMBRANDT

A ROMANCE OF HOLLAND

CHAPTER I

From Leyden to Amsterdam

THE white clouds, rushing up from the North Sea, piled themselves together like snow-white mountains as they neared the zenith. Rembrandt looked up to them as he stepped toward the big, heavy canal-barge that was to take him to Amsterdam. His father, the miller, Harmenz and his wife, turned back toward the mill as the moorings of the canal-barge were cast off and the boat very slowly began to make its way down the river. The ardent painter stood on the deck at the stern and waved his hand in farewell. Long he watched as the mill slowly, very slowly, faded in the distance. Even until near evening it seemed as if he could see those giant arms revolving in their powerful sweeps. Until the sun was set he knew the mill-home was reflected in the river, and just before the sun set there came a mellow glow that suffused the green of the meadows with yellow.

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As Rembrandt looked upon the mill in that last sunset gleam there was the glow of life upon the revolving sails ; there was a sun-pierced shadow over the rooms where dwelt the father and the mother. Rembrandt watched until not even a touch of the life-glow was left on the highest sail of the mill. As night came on, the barge was moored to the bank, and all betook themselves to rest in the little cabin at the stern. The painter lay down in his narrow berth, seeking rest ; but he thought not of his home in the Leyden mill, because the fever of his art was upon him. What he did think was, " What can I do in Amsterdam in my painting ? "

He woke early in the morning, just as the level beams of the rising sun awakened the green of the meadows. The barge was still moored to the bank ; but Peter, the bargeman, was awake and already preparing to go on with the slow journey, while Geertje, the wife, was making ready the coffee and rolls and cheese for the morning meal.

" Peter," said Rembrandt, " stand there just where you are. Never mind about the boat for a while. I want to make a sketch of you in this brilliant light."

The surprised bargeman thought his passenger was demented. Why in the world should anyone want to paint his homely features ! Nevertheless he did as he was bid, and stood there, rope in hand, until the artist, with a few swift, sure touches, completed the sketch.

" Now, I must have Geertje, too ! Come, Geertje ! Come here ; I want to paint your picture beside your good man's."

FROM LEYDEN TO AMSTERDAM

"Nay, sir, but the coffee will be burnt."

"Never mind the coffee, I say. Come here while this light lasts. I can't get the shadows if you keep me waiting."

"Nay, nay! Nobody never painted me, nor I ain't fit to be painted. What ails you to be jesting that way with a poor woman?"

"I am not jesting, Geertje. I want to make a sketch of you in this light. Come quick, I say, or I shall lose my chance!"

Grumbling and muttering the old woman came out of the cabin at last, much offended because she thought the painter was making a jest of her. She was very homely and she knew it, but now her cheeks were flushed with anger and her eyes were flashing. Her face was full of character. She would have refused to come if she had dared, but few could resist Rembrandt in his imperious moods. She put one hand on the taffrail and raised the other in threatening remonstrance, and was about to express her outraged feelings in most forcible language.

"There, that will do," said Rembrandt. "Don't say a word; don't move. It's just right as it is. I don't think I could better it. Ah! that light is perfect. Quiet, please; it will only be a few minutes."

The old woman was too astonished to speak, and actually posed most excellently for the artist because almost paralyzed with amazement.

In a very short time the master-hand had completed the sketch, and the insulted Geertje had not said one word.

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“ Oh, thank you! thank you! These are good sketches—the light was wonderful. I think I may make them up into a picture. Now get the breakfast, for I am hungry.”

She turned in silence and went back to the cabin, where, soon after, the three sat down for their simple meal.

The bargeman and his wife stared at each other open mouthed, both overcome with wonder. Why in the world should anyone want to paint them? It was a great and altogether inexplicable event in their simple lives, and they had no words for adequate expression of their feelings.

Rembrandt was absorbed in thought. Should he put these two character-sketches into a picture and put in a background of the landscape about him, or would the two heads be enough without a background of landscape?

“ I will make a sketch of the scene,” he said to himself, “ and then I can tell better.”

Immediately after breakfast the painter went to the deck again and began his sketch. The level lines of the dykes, the smooth surface of the water, a cottage with a red-tiled roof, a windmill on the bank, far-stretching meadows—it was a picture as full of the Dutch spirit as were the heads of the bargeman and his wife.

“ No; I will not put them together,” thought the painter. “ Either is better alone. I will work them up separately.”

By this time the barge was under as full head-way as it ever attained, for the wind was favorable and the great brown sail was spread. Peter

FROM LEYDEN TO AMSTERDAM

kept pushing with his long pole and Geertje handled the tiller; but every little while some peasant would come to the bank and motion for them to stop, as he had something he wanted to send to Amsterdam for sale. It might be a pig or a calf, perhaps a bale of hay, or some fresh vegetables. Often the peasants themselves came on board to take care of their goods. The barge was soon nearly full with its curious cargo, and its picturesque at once appealed to Rembrandt, who straightway made a sketch of it.

But the painter was becoming impatient about the slow progress and the continual stopping.

"How far is it to Haarlem, Peter?" he said.

"It is no very far, master. If ye take the road and walk there, ye'd get there sooner. Will ye bide the night there, master?"

"Yes, Peter, I think so. I want to see a painter there named Hals—Franz Hals. I think I will walk on and you will be there to-night. You will spend the night there?"

"Yes, sure, master. We always bide the night at Haarlem, and you'll find us by the second bridge above the town-hall. We'll no leave till ye come."

CHAPTER II

An Evening with Franz Hals

REMBRANDT left the boat and took the road that led to Haarlem. It was a narrow road, so narrow that there seemed hardly room for two wagons to pass, especially as there were ditches on each side, and a serious accident would surely happen if one turned too far out either to the right or to the left. In places the road was shaded by trees on each side, pollard willows and elms mostly, and beneath the shade of these it was pleasant to walk. The painter walked gayly on. He was in high spirits, for the path he trod was leading him to the Mecca of his art. Everything he saw seemed a subject for a picture. A dozen times he was minded to stop and sketch, but he refrained, fearing that he might reach Haarlem too late to meet Franz Hals.

Rembrandt Harmenz van Rhyn was at this time an extremely handsome man. He was twenty-five years of age, in the very prime of a beauty still partly that of youth, but already impressed with the thoughtfulness and intensity of genius. His eyes were large and dark, set rather close together. The eyebrows were strongly marked and almost met above the nose, giving the expression of concentration both of sight and thought. The

AN EVENING WITH FRANZ HALS

nose itself was large and a little coarse in form, but the mouth was mobile and sensitive. The lower part of the face was refined and firm in outline, though the chin was very strong and firmly modelled. Abundant, clustering curls surrounded the head and made both a frame and a background for the powerful and most expressive face. At this time he was close shaven. There was neither beard nor mustache. In later days he wore both, and the expression of his face was thereby greatly changed, and not for the better. He was of middle height, but had a haughty carriage that made him seem much taller than he really was. If anyone had met him that morning walking along the narrow road that led to Haarlem, he would surely have wished to turn back and look again upon a face and form so plainly impressed with unusual power.

Rembrandt was by no means unaware of his physical charms. Perhaps for that reason he painted his own portrait again and again.

He walked on and on with a light step, and soon the walls and spires of Haarlem were seen beyond the meadows. Those walls! What a history was there! What deeds of heroism had been done upon them in the struggle against the Spanish tyranny! That church with the great spire! It was there the burghers worshipped, when they were not fighting in the awful time of the siege. These stirring events were still fresh in the mind of every Hollander, and Rembrandt's pulse throbbed as he thought of the brave deeds of his countrymen, and he said to himself even

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then : " Some day I will paint these great men, and future ages shall know of our Dutch heroes."

Then he entered the town and began to wander about its narrow streets. He did not know where Franz Hals lived ; but he thought he would go to the place in front of the town-hall, where surely the best inn would be, and there he would inquire. The streets converged toward this centre of the town life, and soon Rembrandt was in a large open place surrounded by gabled houses, except on one side, where stood the beautiful hall of Haarlem. As he had supposed, the inn was on the opposite side of the place, and he went toward it.

It was summer-time, and there were little tables in front of the inn around which the guests were seated drinking their wine and beer and talking most noisily. One man was evidently the centre of attraction. He was surrounded by an admiring crowd, and every few minutes someone would propose his health and drain a flagon of Rhine wine in his honor. He was a very large, corpulent man ; but his face was most intellectual and his hands delicate and sensitive, clearly the hands of an artist. He had a full gray beard and a flowing mustache. His eyes gleamed with merriment, though they were very deep and expressive. The truth is, he was a little merrier just then than was well for him, for it was a great day for Franz Hals. His masterpiece had just been hung in the town-hall, and his fellow-townsmen were congratulating him.

Rembrandt knew in a moment that further inquiry was needless. This hero of the hour could

AN EVENING WITH FRANZ HALS

be none other than Franz Hals himself. The young painter paused for a moment to look at the most famous master of Holland. He saw the genius in the face. He saw in the whole scene that excess of conviviality which was the bane of Hals' life.

He had a letter to Hals from his master, Swanenburgh, of Leyden; and without hesitation he went toward the group of revellers and, passing through them, placed the letter in the hands of Franz Hals. The master was by no means drunk as yet. He was only very merry. He read the letter, and then he looked on the noble face of the young man, while kindling interest gleamed in his artist eye. There was a fellow-feeling at once. "This is a kindred spirit," thought Hals.

"Welcome, welcome to Haarlem, Rembrandt! Waiter! a flagon of Rhenish—a generous one. Bequick about it. Sit ye down, I would know you well. I've heard of you. Oh, yes, Rembrandt's name has not stayed behind the walls of Leyden. But you are young yet. Time before you—time for art. Ah! ha! There's the Rhenish! Your health, my lad. But you don't drink, my boy. Won't you drain the glass in a toast to art, our mistress? I have you now. I know you love her as I do. To art! art! art!"

"It is indeed an honor to drink to art with such a master. I will join you heartily, though, in truth, I am no lover of wine."

"What! What do you say? A painter, an artist, and not love good wine? Why, what's come over you, man? Better mend your ways

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at once. Wine is a good creature, truly a hand-maid of art. Do you know my mandolin player? No? I painted him after a goodly feast at this very tavern, and he is full to the brim with merriment and wine. Smiling won't go out of fashion so long as they can see him. Don't be serious, my boy. There aren't any monks in the kingdom of art. But come on, I've drunk enough for the time. I want to show you my Doelen picture in the hall yonder."

"I have heard of the work," said Rembrandt. "I am most eager to see it. I have longed to see one of your great pictures. We have no fine examples at Leyden. We are poor in art. That is why I go to Amsterdam."

They walked across the square toward the town-hall, a beautiful example of the Dutch renaissance. There was one fine gable and a battlemented cornice from which rose the high-pitched roof of red tile. Within was a noble room with raftered ceiling, high wainscoting, and windows almost like those of a Gothic church, excepting that the subjects chosen for the stained glass were not saints and martyrs, but coats of arms and various heraldic devices. As they entered Hals said :

"See you the hall, my lad, the hall of Haarlem? To-day they have welcomed their painter there again. For years I have not seen it. Ah! but I must not speak of that. In God's truth, I did not mean to hurt my wife. She angered me. She knew nothing of my art. I was angry; perhaps I had drunk too much. I don't know. They banished me when she died, and for fourteen years I

AN EVENING WITH FRANZ HALS

have not seen the town-hall of Haarlem, but they had to have their painter for the guild. See those banners, there at the left? They were carried in the siege by those very men. Look you, Rembrandt, I had to use more color there than ever I have used before. Black and white were not enough. The green and the red were needed. My hand has not lost its cunning, but I am getting old. Still it is there, it is there! Tell me, are not those the burgher warriors who fought on the Haarlem walls? They are feasting now, but they fought better than they feasted. Tell me, is not the spirit there?"

Rembrandt looked in wonder upon the picture. It was indeed true that the spirit of the burgher warriors was there, and there was a splendor of color that none had seen before in the work of Franz Hals. He had been in exuberant spirits and had frolicked with his brush, perhaps because of joy at the home-coming after the long exile.

Rembrandt thought, "Why not stay here and study with this man? Surely I can find no greater master. But no, I cannot trust him. Who can tell how soon he may commit some other crime in his cups?"

Aloud he said: "Master, the picture is great. I wonder not that the guild is paying you all honor to-day. No other painter has thus given the very life and spirit of those who fought for the fatherland."

"Think you so indeed? I'm glad. Yet I know there is something lacking. Someone will paint a better Doelen picture. Perhaps you may. Who

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knows? But come on, come home with me. You will not leave till morning. Come. We'll dine together, and the wife and children will give you good cheer."

The two painters left the hall as the light began to fail, and went toward Hals' home.

"Rembrandt, I wish I knew what the trouble is? Why is it not complete? They all praise it. It is good, I know it is good; but it is not what it ought to be. Now what is the reason? Perhaps there is not enough color, or is the composition wrong? Tell me what you think."

"Why should you ask me, master that you are? Is there a trouble? Then surely you must understand better than I. I have been thinking that it might be better to stay here in Haarlem and study with you, for who in Amsterdam could have painted that picture that I have just seen? There is no one who could do it save yourself, and yet you are not at rest about it. How almost infinite are art's possibilities! There is always unrest for the artist, always the highest that eludes him."

"Yes, yes, I know that is true; but come, come, come, the dinner will be cold. It is getting late and I am hungry and I am thirsty; but that is not strange, I am always athirst. Let us go quickly."

They walked on by the bank of the canal that was the city's central highway, and after a little while they turned into a narrow street which led to the home of Franz Hals. It was strange that the personal power of Rembrandt should have so affected Hals in this first meeting. Hals was much the older man, and his fame was already achieved

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as a painter. He did not know then that the art of his later years was to be inspired by the work of this poor, haughty, but very young man, only twenty-five years old, going to Amsterdam that he might live in an atmosphere of art. They came to the door. Hals lifted the great iron knocker, and rapped again and again. Pattering footsteps were heard on the stairs, and the children crowded each other in their eagerness to open the door for father. The mother stood at the top of the stairs. When the door was opened she said, "Is that you, Franz? I should think it was time. Drinking again at the tavern, I suppose. Always the same. What ails you, man; have you no decency? How long do you think we have been waiting?"

"Nay, nay, wife, do not chide me. I have met a brother in art. Rembrandt, you know."

"No, I don't know and I don't want to know. I suppose he is another roisterer like yourself, for art leads to drinking, and worse things, too."

"Peace, wife, peace in God's name! Rembrandt is here. Give him welcome. He will bide here for the night."

"Ah! well, let him come, then."

"But, wife, he is here with me. Rembrandt, come; my wife and my children will greet you."

The young painter had well-nigh fled, for the door was still half-open, and there seemed little hope that the evening would be a pleasant one. But at Hals' word he came forward shyly, and still with the haughtiness of bearing that was natural to him.

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“Hiskia, this is Rembrandt, of Leyden. He goes to Amsterdam to practise his art, but to-night he stays with us.”

“My frow, I am proud to meet the lady of the greatest of Holland’s masters. I thank you both for your kind welcome.” The grave dignity of the young painter produced instant impression on Hals’ wife.

“Ah! well, ah! well! You said but now that dinner was waiting. We are ready. Come all, let us not tarry. Surely we are nothing loath to be refreshed with your good cheer, wife.”

They went to the dining-room, the hungry children crowding eagerly behind them. It was truly late for the Dutch dinner, usually taken at half-past four or five. It was no wonder the wife was out of temper and the children half-famished, but such happenings were not uncommon in the household of Franz Hals. Usually it was the loitering in the tavern that caused them, but this time the shrewish woman knew that something unusual had happened. She knew of the exhibition of her husband’s masterpiece, though she cared nothing for the picture, and she felt at once in the presence of the stranger an influence that stirred her to her depths. Therefore she sought to quench the fires of her wrath, and in a little while only smouldering embers remained, though there was still danger of flame in them.

The home of Hals was filled with beautiful furniture, and the glasses and silver of his table were exquisite. It was a wonder that he could afford to buy such things; and the truth was, he had not

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paid for them and never did. However, he enjoyed them, without caring about whether they were paid for or not.

This was a strange contrast to the simplicity of the Leyden mill. It was Rembrandt's first sight of the luxury and splendor that were about the great Dutchmen of the time, and it made a deep and lasting impression upon him.

"Hiskia, bring some of that wine of Bourgogne that I had of the Frenchman; and Franz, my son, fetch the big silver tankards from the chimney-piece yonder."

"Nay, Franz, surely thou didst have enough at the tavern."

Said Rembrandt, "I crave not the wine; I beseech you, bring it not forth for me."

"Nay, but I will, I will. What say you, a brother artist here and I not pledge him in my best? The tavern, say you? There was naught there only a few toasts to my picture—naught, naught, I say! Bring me the Bourgogne. I will have it. Franz, be quick with the tankards."

"Ah! well, ah! well," thought the wife, "this will be a bad time for me;" but she said nothing aloud. Rembrandt's presence had stilled her noisy tongue. It was strange, the effect of that deep, dark face, those searching eyes; and yet now there was an eager light in them, for Rembrandt was kindled to an artistic glow by the thought that now the master would talk. Now he would learn some secret of the art he loved. If wine were needed to make him talk, let him have wine. The young man wanted none himself; but he was alert,

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excited, watching with impatience for the word of the great painter. Surely he would talk about art. And he did. The generous wine was brought. The great silver tankards were filled. Franz Hals drank deep, and Rembrandt feigned to drink, and then the talk began.

"So you go to Amsterdam for art's sake, because there are too many doctors of theology in Leyden? You are going to follow the Italians? There are many of them there. Bah! the slaves! They are copyists, naught else! Why it seems as if a Dutchman had no respect for himself, and as soon as he wants to be a painter off he goes to Italy."

"Yes, I know," said Rembrandt. "Lastman did that. He stayed there long, and he paints well in the Italian manner. But I do not like it. That is why I left Leyden. That is why I came to you here at Haarlem. Is there nothing but imitation left to us? Surely the Dutch are explorers in the seas of the North and the South; why not in art? Tell me, Franz Hals, tell me, I say, what is the secret of your art? Can you give it to me? May I study with you?"

"Tell you my secrets! Ha! Ha! What's a poor fellow going to live on then? But you know black and white, Rembrandt, black and white. Ah! the possibilities of black and white! What need of color? But, yes, I had to use it with the banners in the Doelen picture. My secrets! Oh! well, black and white, and again black and white! But the brush work—the secret of it. Did you ever think, my boy, what the stroke of the brush

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means? Look at the cheek of my mandolin player. It was only one stroke, just one, but it stays there. It lives! I know it! But teach it to another! I can't. I'm no teacher. I wish I could master myself, but I can't. Another glass, my boy, another glass! Who knows, perhaps someone will bring the full color into the brush sweep; but Rembrandt, my friend, I really don't think anyone in Amsterdam can teach you that. No, I don't. No, I don't. Some more of the Bour-gogne! Your health again!"

"Franz, Franz, drink no more, for God's sake! You've been drinking all day, Franz; for the sake of our love touch no more." So said the wife.

"What have you to do about it, I'd like to know; get out of here. Where would you have been if I hadn't married you? On the streets."

"Do you taunt me with my shame?"

"I don't care about your shame, as you call it. It was your own fault as much as mine, and I saved your name by marrying you. Get out of here. I won't have you here with your scolding. Why should I not pledge my friend in another glass? I will! I will! If you don't go, I'll throw this tankard at your head."

He seized the great silver cup in his hand as in act to throw it, but the frightened woman fled, and the children had long since skulked away, except one who had hidden under the table; but now he, too, crawled out, and with a shriek of terror gained the still open door through which his mother had gone.

"A glass, a glass, Rembrandt! There is plenty

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of the Bourgogne! Drink! drink to art! to art! Ah, where is the woman? Gone? Why did I kill the other one? What demon is in me? Rembrandt, art, art the mistress! Oh! the mistress! Where is she? What do I see? Her form there! Ah! that was the first one! She is dead! dead! dead! and they banished me for it. Why does she grin like that? Is she laughing in death? Out on it! What is it, Rembrandt? Do you see her there on the floor—there by your feet? Ah! Ah! there! Oh, horror! I fear I shall see her forever.”

Hals put his hands before his eyes and started up in mortal terror, overturning the flagon and the tankards on the table. Then he fell back on his chair, muttering incoherent words. But now he became more quiet, yielding to the stupor of the wine.

“I cannot stay here to-night,” thought Rembrandt, “but I cannot leave him thus. I will call the servant and the wife. They must care for him.” He opened the door which the frightened child had closed. There on the very threshold was the wife, cowering and trembling. “I knew it would be like that,” she said. “I have seen him that way before, but not often. Oh! I beg you believe me, not often. Shame! shame! that you should have been here to-night. What must you think of him? And yet he will paint again in a little while as only such a master can. Think not too hardly of him. We will care for him here; trouble not yourself.”

“My frow, I am sorry; my heart is sore for you,

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but I see that I cannot help ; I will go. There is a bed for me on the boat which brought me here on the canal. I know where to find it. It is better that I should stay no longer. I thank you for your kindness to me."

So Rembrandt left the home of Hals, and went out in the night to seek in the strange city the place where Peter had said he would moor the barge. He had no fear about not finding it, for the narrow streets all converged toward the central highway of the canal. It was bright moonlight, and the gables were silvered by the pure white beams. All was calm. Long since the simple Dutchmen had sought their rest. He was too far from the walls to hear the pacing of the sentries there, who now kept watch again since the truce with Spain had expired. The young man was stirred, touched to the very depths of his nature. "Alas! alas! the great man, the master painter! Can genius thus degrade itself? What need to think of anything but art? But of Hals! What didst thou do? Thy first wife killed by thee, thou saidst! Can such things be, or was it mere raving? Nay, he said he was banished, and for that cause. My God! I never shall forget this day, and I had thought to study with him! There is no greater painter, but such as he is no fit teacher. It is a wonder that he can paint at all. I will take warning by him, but I will hasten to Amsterdam. Surely, there I shall live among artists great and not degraded."

Though so intent upon his thoughts Rembrandt did not lose his way. He soon came to the broad

REMBRANDT

canal, and then he wandered up and down its banks until at last he found Peter's barge. The worthy Dutchman was aroused after some trouble.

"Eh, eh, master ! but you said you would not come till morn. What happened ye ?"

"Never mind, Peter ; I could not stay with my painter friend. He was not well. Let me in, for I would fain sleep." But there was little sleep for Rembrandt that night. The interview with Hals had so greatly excited him that sleep would not come as he lay for hours thinking of that strange scene.

CHAPTER III

The Meeting with Albrecht von Stoltzing

THE next morning at dawn the barge started again on the slow way. Rembrandt was impatient and feverish, thinking always of the tragedy of Franz Hals' life, except when he was thinking of his own art. Soon the thought of that blotted out all else. Ah! here was a beautiful subject for an etching! He had not his tools with him, but he would sketch it and afterward etch it. The long, level lines, the clumps of trees, the gathering clouds, were quickly put down with a sure and living touch. "Now I will walk again," he thought. "It is better than the slow drifting of the barge."

He found, as before, the same narrow road, the same pollard trees, the same ditches, the same solitude. No, it was not so! There was someone walking just before him, certainly a stranger, for his garb was not like that of the Dutch. Who could it be? It was unusual in those days to see foreigners walking on the Dutch roads alone. Surely the stranger must have been moved by some strong impulse to come thus into the midst of Holland while the wars all about were so fierce, and nowhere was the life of a foreigner safe. This man looked like a German, if one could judge from

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his dress. He looked, too, somewhat like an artist. He wore a broad, flat cap, such as Rembrandt himself had often worn, and he also had a long cloak that enveloped him almost completely. For some reason that he never afterward could explain, the thought of Albrecht Dürer flashed into Rembrandt's mind. He quickened his pace and soon overtook the stranger, who was walking leisurely, apparently absorbed in thought.

"May I join you? One does not find so many companions on these lonely roads, especially in these troublous times. How came you here and whither are you bound, for it is dangerous for those not of our race to be alone here so near Amsterdam to-day?"

The young man turned and said: "I see not the danger. I am a peaceful man. The wars are naught to me. I go to Amsterdam to find a mart for some prints I have, the best of them by the immortal Albrecht Dürer."

"Prints, you say! prints by Dürer! Let me see them!"

"Nay, I have them not with me. They are in my mails on the barge. They will come later. But, pray, who are you that takes so quick an interest in art work?"

"I! I! Only one who is studying painting and cares for naught else. My name is Rembrandt—Rembrandt Harmenz van Rhyn—and your's?"

"I am Albrecht von Stoltzing, and I come from Nuremberg."

"You come from Nuremberg, the home of art!"

ALBRECHT VON STOLTZING

I have heard that everything there is artistic, yet I know not the place save from words of others. Why did you leave such a place to come to this dreary Holland, with its fog and wet and winds, clouds and flat lands? What can a man find to paint here?"

"Nay, but I came not to paint. In sooth, as you say, there is a dreariness in this land even though there is bright sunlight to-day. I begin to wonder at what I have heard about the great painters being in Amsterdam. But I am sure they are there, and I know there is a man who has only a little while ago opened a shop there for the sale of prints and etchings and engravings, perhaps pictures too. It is a famous name—the nephew of Hombertus, of Friesland, who went to England as envoy to Queen Elizabeth, the friend of William the Silent, your great prince. Hendrik von Ulenburg is his name."

"Oh, yes," said Rembrandt, "I know him well. He is a noble man."

"I go to seek him," said Albrecht, "and sell, if I can, some of the prints which I had from the very home of Dürer himself. You are all so rich in Holland, as men say, that it seems the best market; and I know, too, that you love art. But is there really danger here? I had not thought of it. You had the truce."

"Yes, but that was only for fifteen years. It has expired long since, and no man can tell when the Spaniard will be on us again."

"True, true, I had forgotten it."

"Where shall you dwell in Amsterdam, Herr

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“Albrecht?” said Rembrandt. “Know you the town?”

“Nay, Mynheer Rembrandt, I was never there; but I trust to find, through Hendrik the print-seller, a lodging-place.”

“That’s well. It might be best for me to ask his advice, though I have often been there before. I have some letters from Leyden masters to some painters there, but I know not just where I shall lodge. I mean to have a studio somewhere. I think Hendrik will tell me where to find one. I have a letter to one Jan Six, who is said to be well known there. Know you him?”

“Nay, I know none in the place. My Dürer prints will be my password among artists. That I know. I fear nothing, for in that place of art and wealth there can no harm come to one who has such treasures.”

“See to it they be not stolen; but, ah—ha! ha! ha!—they are on a barge—a canal barge. A captain such as mine I suppose, and with such a wife! Ha! ha! why such people would not know a Dürer from a donkey; and the Dürers would be hidden among the cabbages and carrots, behind the pigs and the calves. Oh! oh! oh! you need not concern yourself. Your art treasures are safe hidden there. I wish you had seen me painting the captain’s wife the other day—the captain of my barge, I mean! Oh, somebody ought to write about it. She was like an insulted fury because I painted her. Oh! yes, your Dürers are safe enough. But where did you leave your boat?”

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"At Haarlem, just as you did. The boat will come in by the Bennen Amstet, and I am to find it at the Dam."

"The same with me. We will go on together, friend. I meant to pass the night with Hals, at Haarlem."

"With Hals, that great man? We know him at Nuremberg. Why stayed you not with him?"

"Alas! alas! It is a pity to tell. He had been carousing and had gone too far. His wife was shamed and in tears. I could not stay."

Engaged in this pleasant converse the two walked on, sometimes in the shade of the pollard willows, sometimes in the open among the broad level meadows where the kine were grazing, sometimes on a dyke by a riverside where were many windmills with their ceaseless whirl of busy sails. The scene was new to the young German, though familiar enough to Rembrandt. The son of the Leyden miller told Albrecht of the mills and the life of the millers, and how closely they were connected with the very existence of the Dutch. It was interesting and quite new to this stranger among the Dutch. His face lightened with the flash of intellectual appreciation. His great blue eyes shone brightly. He was no longer the dreamer, but the alert and keen thinker.

"He is like Dürer himself," thought Rembrandt. It was partly true, although Albrecht von Stoltzing had not the majesty of presence that characterized the great artist of Nuremberg. He was of middle height, but strongly built and well-proportioned. He had the same long curls

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falling on his shoulders, so well-known in the portraits of Dürer. They were the blonde curls of the Vikings of Northland—such curls as the great among the Saxons and their kin have often had. The brow was noble, pure and white, and full of thoughtfulness. The mouth was mobile and sensitive, but partly hidden by the mustache and beard, which were full and silky and seemed never to have known a razor's touch.

There was something of the aboriginal man about Albrecht, cultivated as he was in many ways. He was ignorant of convention and cared not for rules of any kind. Yet he was not rebellious against law. He would obey and gladly. It was easier. But he did not care to think about such things. He had two passions, art and poetry, and yet he was neither an artist nor a poet. In spite of his Viking look, he was a man of action only in an emergency. He would fight like a lion if roused, but he hated to be roused. Nevertheless, he had not been afraid to come alone to Holland in these stormy times, and here he was with Rembrandt nearing the Dutch capital in the year 1631.

"So we are brothers in art," said Albrecht. "But I am only a lover of it, and deal in the works of others. You are already a creator. I have heard of your works. Why, you are already famous."

"Nay, nay, I have had but a boy's success. I was but fourteen years old when I quitted Lastman's studio. I have not begun. I would gladly forget my past work, but I am sure I could do

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no better in Leyden. One must be with great painters if he is to do great work. I am stifled by the learned doctors of the University. What have their syllogisms and their theologies to do with my painting? Nothing at all. I verily believe they think painting is an invention of the enemy."

"Rembrandt, I believe you are a master now. I want to be with you in Amsterdam. Are you alone? But I know you must be, or you would have spoken of the wife."

"Wife! wife! of what are you talking? I have had no time to think about a wife, and I have had no money to support one. I believe I don't want one. I would rather have art for my mistress and live alone—except for her sweet companionship."

"Ha! ha! I don't believe a word you say. You'll have a wife soon enough, and you'll love her as a woman should be loved. It is written in your face. If ever there is a true lover born, it is you. I can read character. Some of the old Norse blood is in me, and there were seers and dreamers of dreams among us. As for me, I want my love. I dream of my lady always, but she has not come yet. Perhaps I may find her in your great city here before us. I think I could love one of your plain Dutch women, who make the house peaceful, yet rule it well. Such an one would let me dream my dreams, and yet would spur me on to do my work, such as it is. Yes, I believe I'll marry a Dutch girl. It would be good for me, and I should be happy."

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The young men were now nearing the city. The spires of the churches were first seen. Then the three towers of St. Anthony's Gate, afterward the Mint. The gabled houses clustered about them, and soon appeared the frowning barrier of the walls—many bastioned and irregular in shape—protecting the river and canals, the arteries of the city's life-blood, and protecting, too, the homes and halls of the burghers, the soldiers, the artists, and the thrifty Dutchmen whose wealth was growing to such vast proportions. It was a time of war. Men were killing each other all over Europe in the name of religion through that fearful strife of thirty years, that was not to end for a long seventeen years. Nevertheless, the canals and the rivers were fairly burdened with rich cargoes from the East. The wealth of the Indies was pouring into Amsterdam. There were great ships of war also, bristling with guns, larger now than those that Heemskerk fought with when he immortalized the life he lost at Gibraltar; but they were built on the same model, very broad in the beam, with high poop and prow, and not so large as to be difficult of handling. They were noble ships; and Rembrandt's heart throbbed with pride as he saw them there ready for instant action, and remembered that but for them, and those that had gone before them, those Indian merchantmen would not now be furling their sails by the wharves of Amsterdam, and unloading those treasures that filled the coffers of the merchants and made them able to buy the pictures and all the other works of art that they loved.

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It was an impressive sight, familiar to Rembrandt, but quite strange to Albrecht, who wondered much at the picturesqueness and the evident opulence, which seemed almost fabulous.

They came at last to the gate called the Kaerlemmer Port. It was strongly fortified with bastions and towers, as were all the other gates of Amsterdam at this time. A large company of armed men was stationed there, for it was one of the principal entrances to the city. After some little parleying and examination of credentials, the young men were admitted.

CHAPTER IV

Finding the Barges

“ALBRECHT,” said Rembrandt, “now that we have passed the gate it would be well, I think, to find the barges and get our mails ere we go to Hendrik’s place. What think you?”

“Indeed, yes, if the bargemen are now come; but they are so slow. I think they must be dreamers, like me. What else could they do but dream on a Dutch canal, unless when they wake up to take in the pigs and calves and the peasants and the vegetables? Even that effort is not very exciting. They might dream again and not get to Amsterdam at all. But, well, we’ll seek them. They were to be on the Dam, was it not?”

“Yes, yes,” said Rembrandt, impatiently, “of course. That is the central place. The barges all go there, or as near as they can get to it. Sometimes the canal is so crowded that it takes a good while to get to the Dam.”

“Rembrandt, tell me, what is the Dam? Is there a mill-pond there? I don’t know about it.”

“Oh, the Dam is simply a name that comes from ages ago. They did dam the river there in the earliest days of the Counts of Holland, and afterward they built a castle there, and the beginning of Amsterdam was at the place. Now it is

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the very centre of the city. But, come, let us seek the bargemen."

It was a long walk even in those days from the gate by which they had entered to the Dam, but at last the young men came there and began to search among the multitude of boats for those on which they had embarked. It was no easy task. There was a perfect babel of voices, every bargeman crying to every other, each telling where he had a right to moor and threatening all in his way with condemnation to the lowest depths if they would not give place. The language was most forcible, and showed clearly enough that the Dutchman was not always asleep or dreaming. He was certainly a master of expletives, and willing to assert his rights by word and equally by deed.

The young men went up and down without success for awhile. At last Rembrandt burst into a fit of laughter.

"Ha! ha! ha! I have found mine. Oh! oh! There is it yonder. Ah! ah! ah!" and he laughed till he groaned.

"What is the matter with you, man?" said Albrecht. "How know you which is your boat?"

"Look you. See you yon sturdy captain and his wife—there on the boat already moored?"

"Yes, I see; what are they doing?"

"Don't you see? They are looking at each other and then at two pictures, see you; each has one of the pictures. Ha! ha! ha! Albrecht, those are sketches that I made of each of them, just after I left Leyden. Let us come near and hear what they are saying."

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The young men approached the boat. There were some bales of merchandise on the quay, and concealed behind these they heard the worthy Peter and his beloved Geertje as they talked.

"Who'd have thought it now, wife; I'm main fond of you, I am. Ye know it, woman; but I never knew ye was so fine. Why, my frow, ye're going to live for your beauty. Ye'll never be forgot."

"Ay! ay! but, Peter, man, what did the miller's boy? I love ye well, ye know; but, man alive, I did never think ye was well looking. But look at this now. Why, Peter, my own man, I did well in choosing ye, though I little thought then your good looks were so wonderful. Ah, man, man, we're no fit to stay longer on the boat. Sure, there is a better place for such as us."

Rembrandt could restrain himself no longer. He burst into a hearty fit of laughter, and Albrecht joined him. The sudden sound disturbed the admiring pair. They arose hastily and took the sketches back to the cabin where Rembrandt had left them; these peasants would not have been discovered for the world in such an unwonted act. With instinctive insight Rembrandt knew this and remained concealed for some time behind the bales, until after the captain and his wife were quite composed again, though still murmuring to each other words of wondering admiration. At last he and Albrecht emerged and quietly approached the boat.

"Ah, Peter, there you are. Can you help me

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find the boat my friend here took on the Rhine as he came from Nuremberg?"

After a good deal of pressing to and fro among the crowds that thronged the quays Albrecht's boat was found, and then they got some men with handcarts who took the bags and boxes of the young men across the town to the home of Hendrik von Ulenburg.

Rembrandt had there a hearty greeting. "Ah! my Leyden friend, you here again! On my heart I'm glad to see you, but who is with you?"

"One whom you will be glad to know," said Rembrandt. "Albrecht von Stoltzing, this is my old friend Hendrik von Ulenburg, to whom you have letters, you said. Then perhaps you need not my introduction, but you can give the letters afterward."

"I greet you gladly," said Hendrik; "indeed, I knew something of your coming. You are from Nuremberg, are you not?"

"I am glad from my heart to meet you," said Albrecht. "I have long known that you were a lover of fine prints and that you were a judge of their value. I have many that I would show you—some by the immortal Dürer himself."

"Indeed, indeed. I can hardly wait to see them. But surely you both must be very weary. How came you hither?"

"Oh, we walked most of the way," said Rembrandt, "because the boats were so slow, though after all they came here about as soon as we did."

"Come in here to the dining-room. There's a

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bit of sausage and some Rhenish there. We can talk better about the table."

The young men were indeed weary and accepted Hendrik's invitation with alacrity. After they were refreshed and rested Hendrik asked them both of their plans for the future.

Said Rembrandt: "I have come here to stay. I shall not leave Amsterdam from henceforth. It is the true home of our Dutch art. Hendrik, may I bide with you for a brief time, until I find a studio and a lodging?"

"You know you did not mean to ask the question. You do me honor and more, you do me great pleasure in resting beneath my roof. Know you, my German friend, that this our Leyden painter is a famous man? He is already a master."

"I have heard it said," said Albrecht; "but indeed he did so strenuously deny it as we talked by the way that I half-believed him. He said he had done naught but what he would gladly forget, and that he came hither that he might study his art."

"Talk not of this," said Rembrandt. "It is foolish. But tell me, Hendrik, where dwells Dr. Tulp? I would present a letter to him—but hold! I am selfish as ever. Albrecht, where will you lodge here? I let my own affairs too much engross me."

"I know not, but I thought that Hendrik here might judge. Why cannot we lodge together?"

"Well, well," said the kindly Hendrik, "I would you could both stay here with me, and that you shall do for the time. Concern yourself no

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more about it to-night. On the morrow we will discuss it. Now it is rest ye need. Hans, see that the fire is alight in the guest-room. You must share it, my friends, for there is but one."

The young men needed no second invitation to seek the rest they so much needed.

CHAPTER V

The Studio in the Warehouse

THE next morning the impetuous painter and his new-found friend set themselves to the task of finding a suitable place of abode, though hospitable Hendrik greatly regretted their determination not to stay with him.

"Nay," said Rembrandt, "that could not be, friend Hendrik. I have commissions already, as you know, and must have a studio. We will stay with you, dear friend, until a proper place is found, and then we must leave you. What part of the town would you think best for my purpose, Hendrik?"

"If you needs must leave me, I will help you as well as I can to find what you need. I suppose you do not want to pay much for the place?"

"No, no, not yet," said Rembrandt; "but I will have a beautiful home some day, like that of Hals' at Haarlem."

"I don't doubt it, but for the present—oh, I be-think me now. There was one here but a few days since who said there was an empty warehouse in the western part of the town, on the Bloengracht, not far from the Westerkerk. That might meet your need. I have not seen the place, but it is easy to go there."

THE STUDIO IN THE WAREHOUSE

"Thanks, Hendrik. Come, Albrecht, let us go at once. I must lose no time."

The young men left the home of the picture-dealer, and soon came to the empty warehouse on the canal. Rembrandt was delighted with the place. It was spacious enough to pose his models as he pleased, and to admit of others studying with him, if pupils should come. In the gabled attic it would be easy to put a window in the roof that would give the needed north light. Albrecht was overjoyed to find there was room for him. The Dutch notary was a little slow about making out the papers and concluding the matter; but it was done at last, and the first studio of Rembrandt in Amsterdam was an accomplished fact. Pending these negotiations the letter to Dr. Tulp had to be presented.

"Hendrik," said Rembrandt one day, before the lease was signed, "what a curious name that, 'Tulp.' As I live, it is only Tulip!"

"Why, Rembrandt, you have been here so often I thought you knew that is not his name. That comes from a carved tulip that is on the front of his house. Dutchmen love to do such things. They are fantastic, if they are slow and sometimes rather heavy. Why, the man's name is Claes Pieterz, but he thinks 'Tulip' has a better sound. But don't you believe for a minute that he's any fool because he does a queer thing like that. Look ye, Rembrandt, you may search Amsterdam from wall to wall, and ye'll find no greater man than this same 'Tulip.'"

"Oh, yes! I know, I know. Where does he lecture, Hendrik?"

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“In a room above the small meat market. Twice a week he lectures there, but you cannot be admitted unless you are a student and mean to be a doctor.”

“Indeed, indeed, I’ll put on my gravest mein then, and, looking most learned, will make application for admittance in due form. Do you think these doctors need to study the body more than I do? Verily, I will go at once. I must hear this learned Tulip talk about anatomy. I am very serious in this matter, Hendrik. Give me some means of entrance there. I must see this learned doctor at his work, and I must study with him. True, I have a letter to him, but I would rather go there disguised as a student.”

All this time Albrecht had been quite silent. He was never prone to much talking. Now he said, “I share not in that adventure with you, friend Rembrandt. I love not dead bodies, and would have naught to do with them. I prefer the living, but then I know I am no student. Tell me, Hendrik, who was that maiden who came hither this morning—she with the brown ringlets and the sweet, tender, but laughing face?”

“Oh! that was my cousin Saskia. She is the daughter of the great Hombertus of Zealand, he that went as ambassador to Elizabeth of England.”

“Is it so? She has a rare face. She minds me of a Gretchen whom I knew in Nuremberg, but she is darker. There is, though, the same tenderness, the power of loving in the eyes, the innocent mirth about the lips.”

THE STUDIO IN THE WAREHOUSE

"I saw her not," said Rembrandt; "when was she here?"

"Yesterday, when you were with the notary. She comes oft," said Hendrik; "she loves pictures and prints and must needs see every new one that I have to show."

"Well, I would gladly see her too, if she loves art. I will come again to meet her."

"Well," said Hendrik, "she is beautiful. Perhaps she may let you paint her. She is kindly toward artists."

"I hope so, with all my heart," said Rembrandt. "It is long since I have painted a beautiful woman."

Soon the studio was in order, and Rembrandt was busy upon the portraits for which he already had commissions before leaving Leyden. He was entirely absorbed in his art, and knew nothing of aught but the picture before him until it was done; and no sooner was it off the easel than the ferment of creative energy began to work again upon the next one. These portraits soon became the talk of Amsterdam, and the painter's studio was besieged by patrons and admirers. There came also pupils who would study with him, many of them destined to be famous painters in the coming days.

CHAPTER VI

Saskia

HENDRIK VON ULENBURG came to his desk early one morning to look at Albrecht's prints. Some of these were remarkable examples of Dürer's work. Such had not before been seen in Amsterdam. "Rembrandt must see these," he thought. "I must send for him." Just then someone knocked at the door.

"Why, Saskia, is that you? Why came you here so early?"

"I hardly know, Hendrik, but I want to see the prints the stranger from Nuremberg brought; and then, what is it I hear about the painter from Leyden—Rembrandt? You know him well. Is he as great as they say?"

"I know not, fair cousin, but my thought is that no one who has yet come to Amsterdam has such a mastery of his art. It seems as if a touch of his brush made people live."

"That is what I have heard. Is he like the stranger from Nuremberg whom I met the other day?"

"Not in the least. The one is a painter; the other dreams for the most part, but none the less he has brought to us great works of art. I should not wonder if Rembrandt himself would buy

SASKIA

some of them, for surely he loves such things, and the money is flowing in upon him from the portraits he is painting."

"Tempt him not with them, dear cousin," said Saskia. "It is not well that so young a man should buy what is most costly. He would better wait until he has made a place for himself."

"Why, Saskia, you seem to take much interest in him, though you have not seen him."

"Yes, yes; that is true. You know how I admire painting, and the sudden success of this young man—a miller's son from Leyden, is he not?—interests me much. I wanted to know more about him."

"Cousin Saskia, if you will wait a little while I think you can talk with him yourself. He often comes here early to look at the prints and pictures, before he begins his work in his studio."

"I am astonished at you, Hendrik. What think you of me, that I should wait here to meet a stranger! Would you have me unmaidenly?"

"Nay, nay, Saskia; be not impatient with me. I meant no harm, and I am sure you meant none. Go, if you like. Far be it from me to detain you; but, ah! you are too late. There is Rembrandt coming up the street. You cannot escape him now; he is at the very door."

In another moment the young painter entered, hasty, impetuous as always, thinking of the Dürer prints he wanted to see again.

"Oh, Hendrik, I have but a little while. Show me those prints again. But, ah, pardon! There is a lady here; I will come another time."

REMBRANDT

“ Oh, Rembrandt, what a fellow you are. Is there any reason on earth why you shouldn't meet the lady? Ha, ha! she's my Cousin Saskia. Come in, man. In good sooth, I verily believe she wants to see you. She was just talking to me about you. Now, don't run away, Saskia; here is Rembrandt. Talk to him about his art, if you are so much interested in it as you said a minute ago.”

Thus they met. Saskia, surprised, lifted her face, to which Hendrik's blunt humor had brought blushes. With much dignity she came toward Rembrandt. He stood for a moment not moving. This sudden vision of a beauty such as he had never seen before quite startled him. All his impetuosity, his eagerness for the prints, was forgotten. Here was a living beauty. That was far better. At the first sight it took hold upon the painter's heart, and he could not move nor speak for the love of looking at it; but it was only for a moment. When he realized his rudeness in not greeting her he blushed more deeply than she, and going toward her said, in his courtly way: “ I am honored, indeed, to meet you. I have heard of you from my friend Albrecht and from dear Hendrik here; but albeit, though they spoke most highly, they said not half the truth.”

“ I thank you for your kind words. Indeed, my cousin plays me false. He is always for his fun, and would make a jest of the one he loved best in the world. But then I think you know his humor. I am for fun myself. I am quite like Hendrik in that.”

SASKIA

“Are you indeed for fun? Nay, but there is more, I am sure.”

“Do you think fun so bad a thing? You look so serious about it.”

“No, no, I do not think it bad. I like it, but I suppose I am a little serious all the time about my art, but, believe me, not about your fun, as you call it. It may be fun, but it seems like looking on the playful side of life with a purpose. But why do I talk in this foolish way? I only know what your face has told me. You must forgive me. I am a painter, and it is my habit to study faces. Yours has already told me much.”

“Ah! if you are a painter, I may meet you here again at Cousin Hendrik’s.”

“I hope so, from my heart.” Then Saskia left the print-seller’s shop.

CHAPTER VII

At the House of Sylvius

SASKIA at that time was twenty years of age. She was most genial and kindly, but had known many of those who, in the days of Holland's struggle, had become stern and severe. Her own father had been at the table in the palace at Delft with William of Orange, just before his assassination. Sylvius the preacher was her friend, and at his house she met many who were like the Puritans of Cromwell's time.

Saskia had been greatly influenced by these surroundings, and all through her life she retained a gentle seriousness and a very firm purpose that were contrasted in a singularly charming way with her natural playful sunniness of disposition. It was not strange that Rembrandt and Albrecht had been so much impressed by her. She was in the thought of both while the work at the studio went on. Not that Albrecht worked much, but he sympathized, and that was something ; indeed, it was what Rembrandt needed most until Saskia came into his life, for he was not a man who made friends easily.

"Albrecht," said Rembrandt, one day, "I am tired of this. You know those models are of no use. They are hideous, but I can get no others.

AT THE HOUSE OF SYLVIUS

I wonder if Hendrik's cousin would sit for me. How I should like to paint her portrait."

"I know not," said Albrecht, "but it seems to me there would be no harm in asking. It is easy to find her either at Hendrik's or the house of the preacher Sylvius."

"I wonder if Saskia—well, I said that before. Come on, Albrecht, let us go to Hendrik's place, and then I think I will buy one of your Dürer prints. I want it for the studio. I am full of the thought of beauty, and I must paint Saskia and buy the Dürer prints, or I shall go mad."

"Rembrandt, you ought not to buy the prints. They are too costly for one whose fortune is yet to be made; and then, you know, you mean to get married."

"What in the world is the matter with you, Albrecht? Get married! Why, man! I never said a word about such a thing, nor thought a thought about it either."

"Rembrandt, Rembrandt! Why do you want to paint Saskia?"

"Because she is beautiful, and the models that I have are so bad that a good picture can hardly be made from them."

"Because she is beautiful; and you think, my friend, that you only want to paint her. Oh! well, I know better; but never mind, let us go to Hendrik's and find her, if we can. If not there, she will surely be at the home of Sylvius."

The young men left the studio and went to Hendrik's print-shop. Saskia was not there. Then they went to the preacher's house. That

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was full of ministers and those who attended the church of Sylvius. There were so many that the rooms, although large, were crowded. After a little time, Rembrandt's keen eye found Saskia; but he could not approach her, nor would it have been a proper time to proffer his request.

Just at that moment the preacher was speaking to those who had gathered at his house of human courage, divinely inspired, and his text was really "William the Silent." There was a quiet, a hush of expectancy, as Sylvius went on through the scenes of his life to that awful day at Delft, when the bigot of Spain completed his work and, by the hands of his hired assassin, ended the great man's life.

Saskia had so often heard her father speak of this terrible scene that she was greatly moved, and sought the door, thinking to go home. Rembrandt felt instinctively what her wish was, and passed through the crowd that he might help her. Albrecht came close behind him, and soon they made a way for Saskia to reach the door. She was grateful, but surprised, that these strangers should thus assist her; but she knew they were Hendrik's friends, and therefore trusted them.

Many proud men are shy, and Rembrandt was one of these. At last, however, he mustered up courage enough to tell Saskia that he had come there to seek her, and for what purpose.

"I beg you to pardon me if I have done amiss in asking this favor of you—I am almost a stranger to you—but Hendrik told me you were in-

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terested in art and would help a painter who wants to paint what is beautiful. Forgive me if I embarrass you by my request, but I cannot help it. I want to paint your portrait. Will you let me do it?"

"Indeed, sir, it is quite true that you do embarrass me much. What! say you? paint the beautiful, and in the same breath ask to paint me? Why, I can but laugh! Nay, sir, another reason you did speak of, that you had need of me for art's sake. Then, if that is true, I am serious again. I will laugh no more, but for my life I cannot see what you want with me."

"But, lady! I do want you. I want you very much. I must paint you. I never saw anyone who was such a type—oh! is that it, type! No, I did not mean that—such a—never mind! I know one thing, I mean I want to paint your portrait, and you will come to the studio, will you not?"

"Yes, I think I will come, but it does seem so very droll."

Meanwhile Albrecht, the dreamer, had been quite wide awake, and had been watching the two with great amusement. Rembrandt's embarrassment and boldness combined had quite overcome the young German. He almost laughed aloud. Nevertheless, he seconded Rembrandt's request, and it was agreed that Saskia should come to the studio on the next day.

CHAPTER VIII

The Painting of the Portrait

“ALBRECHT,” said Rembrandt the next morning, “I do not know what to do with the pupils. I never thought. It will never do to have Saskia von Ulenburg here while they are about. It would be an indignity to her.”

“Oh, really, Rembrandt? Why, yes, perhaps so. I had not thought about that. An indignity, you say? I hardly see why, if she is willing to come to an artist’s studio and be painted. You said you only wanted to paint her, but perhaps you thought you might be alone with her. Oh! ho! my friend, I have thee now.”

“Albrecht, I know not what has come over you to talk in this way. You will have your joke, I suppose. Nay, I care not. I wish to paint the face because it is beautiful, but I will not have the lady looked upon and talked about by the pupils.”

“Very well, then, there is plenty of room in the warehouse. Let the pupils take their easels up to the top floor, and you can paint Saskia von Ulenburg below; and then, you know, when you get tired of painting you can go up and give the pupils a little lesson, and then you can come down again and go on with the painting. They will be none the wiser. Not a whit would they care even

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if they did know about your having a lady down here with you. It is not hard to arrange it, since you want it so done. The lady's cousin will be with her; and there will be nothing for the students to talk about, even if they do find out. I have a good mind to come in myself. I can't paint, but I do like to look at a beautiful woman. No, I won't do that. I don't want to lose a friend, and there is no surer way of doing it than to be in the way."

"Albrecht, have done, I say! I will no longer tolerate your jesting in this matter. Nevertheless, the suggestion you give is a good one, and I will follow it. Let us make the arrangements at once."

The pupils were moved accordingly to the upper floor, Rembrandt giving as a pretext that the light was better there. In truth it was, but he might have thought of that before. After all was in order Albrecht went off to Hendrik's, taking some of his beloved Dürers that he might perchance find someone who would buy them.

Saskia came as she had agreed, and with her was the wife of her Cousin Hendrik.

She greeted the painter with a merry smile, saying, "I have come for art's sake, you see, as you asked me to do. Now do your best with your subject, since you have her. If you make an ugly picture of me I will never forgive you—no, never!"

"Fair lady, I thank you for your kindness. I hope to paint truth, and that will be a guarantee for the picture's beauty."

"In good sooth, you have the gallantry of a courtier rather than of a man who paints so seri-

ously as I am told you do. Where learned you these courtly manners? In Leyden's University, perhaps."

"I pray you, do not jest with me. I said but what I meant, nor said I nearly enough. Will you come to the studio—it is close at hand—and let me begin the picture?"

The pose was soon arranged. With the quick intuition of genius Rembrandt saw the very life of his subject, and could have painted it at once if he had done the same as with others; but here there seemed to be something different. He knew that he could paint; but what was it that made his eager brush stop its work of skilful expression, while he laid it down and looked at Saskia? He knew not that he had laid it down. He had forgotten the picture because of the woman, but even yet he did not know it.

"What do you there, friend artist?" said Saskia. "You have not painted a stroke for half an hour, I verily believe, and I am getting tired sitting here."

"Oh, I beg you to forgive me. I had forgotten to paint for awhile." And he thought, "Is that possible for me? What has come to me?"

Then he began again, and there were no words between them for a time. The merry Saskia sat as quiet as she could, and the deep-thinking painter went back to his art again for awhile. Not even Saskia's face, which had so charmed him, could make him neglectful of the art which was his life. But at last the merry maiden could keep silence no longer.

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"I really think you are the most curious person I ever saw. Why, for awhile you did not paint at all, and I got very tired waiting. I wonder what you were doing then. And now you won't do anything but paint, and there's not a word for me—poor me! I am tired. You have painted enough. That will do for one day. Now come and tell me about the mill at Leyden. Were you really born in a mill?"

Rembrandt at the moment was so deeply absorbed in his work that he hardly heard what Saskia said. He added two strokes of the brush, and the likeness was nearing perfection.

"Oh, you spoke to me! I beg your pardon, I was absorbed in your face. Was I born in a mill, did you say? I thought I heard you say that."

"Indeed, that is just what I did say; and I think when a lady asks a question a gentleman ought at least to answer it."

"Oh! please do not be angry. I was just putting that touch on the cheek, and I could not speak just then because of its beauty. Yes, yes, I was born in a mill at Leyden, and my father was a miller; but he was a keen and far-sighted man, and my mother was as able as he."

"You live in a mill? Wasn't there a dreadful clatter of the stones? I can't see however you could have painted in such a place."

"It was not easy; but the truth is I never have been able to do anything but paint, and I am not in the least sure that I can even do that. The clatter of a mill after all matters but little when one is thinking only of his work."

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"I see, I see," said Saskia. "I don't believe all the mills in Holland would have disturbed you a few minutes ago."

"Ah! that is true indeed, fair lady, but I never had such a subject to paint. It would indeed be impossible to think of anything else in the presence of such a face and form."

"Oh! there is your gallantry again. I don't believe you were born in a mill. Millers' sons do not often have the ways of a court. You mind me much of my father Hombertus, with your grave dignity and your fair speeches."

"Now indeed would I give you a courtly answer if I could, for you have paid me two compliments—one in thinking about me at all, and the other in comparing my name with that of the great man whom all our countrymen revere."

Saskia saw that she had betrayed herself, and she blushed deeply and in some confusion arose, saying :

"I think I have sat for you long enough. I will go home. There is work to do in the house, is there not, cousin?"

But Hendrik's wife had been wearied during the long painting not broken by any talk and she was sound asleep in her chair, which was at some little distance from the platform where Saskia had been sitting.

It was true that Rembrandt had deeply interested Saskia the very first time she met him, but she had not been aware of it; nor would she even now admit it to herself, in spite of the personal character of the words she had just been using.

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The very thought that this lovely woman cared to know about him had suddenly revealed to Rembrandt that what he most cared for in the world was to know about her.

"Cousin, I say, we must be going hence." But still the lady slept.

Rembrandt came toward Saskia and said, "Go not yet, I pray. Stay yet a little while. I have answered your questions, will you not answer mine? It is but fair."

"Nay, but I must go. It is getting late. What question would you ask? I have naught to tell you of your art."

"Said I aught of art? It is of yourself I would know."

"Of myself, indeed. Now, no more of your fair words and your jestings, friend artist. Have I not just seen that you forgot me and all else in your work. I will answer no questions, but—but—you may finish your picture of me the day after to-morrow, if you will."

"Ah! well, then, if you will come again I must not detain you now, but I warn you the picture will be long in painting. It is a most intricate and difficult subject, and, moreover, I care but little for what I have done. It pleases me not. I must begin again. I scarce can see why I have failed so utterly. I will not even let you see it."

"But I will see it; indeed, I will. Think you I will sit here so long and all just to do a favor to a painter, and then not see his work?"

By this time Saskia had recovered her self-possession. If her mistake had produced ill re-

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sults, she seemed not to fear them greatly. But Rembrandt would not let her see the picture, and there was a merry war of words between them which at last woke up Hendrik's wife.

Then it was indeed time to go, for Saskia's blushing cheeks and Rembrandt's ardent eyes were eloquent of something quite unconnected with art.

Moreover, a sort of silence seemed to come when Hendrik's wife awakened, which was in itself suspicious.

With much gravity she brought Saskia's wraps and her own, and bade the painter a dignified farewell. He answered with equal courtesy, but his heart gave a leap when he remembered that Saskia had promised to come again for the finishing of the picture.

"Her picture will never be finished so long as she lives," thought Rembrandt.

CHAPTER IX

Dr. Tulp Orders a Picture

THE next day the commission came to Rembrandt from Dr. Tulp for a picture of the doctor and his class engaged in a lesson on anatomy, which picture the famous doctor said he meant to give to the guild of surgeons.

This, then, was to be a work on the same plan with those of Hals, which Rembrandt had seen at Haarlem. Here, indeed, was an opportunity. The painter's heart beat quick with sudden excitement. He at once accepted the commission, and the messenger who had brought it bore back the acceptance. There was not the least hesitation in the artist's mind, although he had never attempted a picture on such a scale. He was beginning to know his mastery and would stop at nothing. Nevertheless, when the messenger had gone he became thoughtful. He felt that he must know this scene before he painted it, and then he remembered what he had said at Hendrik's about going as a student to hear one of Dr. Tulp's lectures.

He left the studio with hurried step, and went toward Albrecht's room.

"Albrecht, Albrecht, are you there?"

"Yes, yes, I am; come in, man. Why, I didn't

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expect you at this hour in the morning. I'm lazy, you know, and I never get over to Hendrik's or anywhere else until long after this time; but I thought you were painting."

"Oh! of course, I have been painting for hours," said Rembrandt, rather impatiently. "That is not what I came to talk to you about. Look at that letter from Dr. Tulp."

He handed Albrecht the commission. The fair-haired German quietly rose and went over to the window, where he might read it more easily. He read with such deliberation that Rembrandt's small stock of patience was exhausted.

"Can't you read a simple thing like that? I thought you were a scholar. Be in haste, for I would speak with you about it."

"Nay, friend," said Albrecht, "be not impatient. I was not only reading it. I was also thinking it over, for it is indeed a weighty matter and requires careful and deliberate thought."

"I thought not long about the acceptance of it, for I sent my answer back by the messenger who brought this; but I am thinking that I cannot do as I would with such a subject unless I can hear the lecture and watch the pupils as they listen. Hark you, Albrecht, I will go there in disguise, as some doctor come from Haarlem to hear the famous Tulp."

"I think, friend Rembrandt, that would hardly do, for all the learned men of Holland are well known to the great professor."

"Perhaps you are right, Albrecht, but devise another way then. I would see them at their

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work quite naturally, as they always do it. If I am there as a painter every one of them, including the learned doctor, will begin posing at once, and then farewell to the truth I want."

"Let us go first to the lesser meat market, where Dr. Tulp lectures in a large room above, and find when next time he will dissect a corpse, and what corpse it will be, and when the lecture will be given. Then shall we be better informed and can make our plans more wisely."

"As you will, then, but let us go directly. I am impatient in this matter, for already it has taken a strong hold upon my mind."

The young men went together to the market, and their inquiries were soon successful, for Albrecht was a German and not well known as yet in Amsterdam, and he said that he had heard of the fame of Dr. Tulp and would fain hear one of his lectures.

The doctor was to give a lesson on the morrow, and the corpse was that of a criminal named Adriaen Adriaenz.

"But what care you about his name, my masters? Sure, ye know that only criminals' bodies are given to the doctors," said the attendant.

"Oh! yes, of course," said Rembrandt, "we know all that; but I know something of this same criminal—at least, I have heard of him—and I would fain see the body to know how he looked. You can let my friend and myself take a seat in a dark corner and listen to the lecture. We will disturb no one. At what hour can we come?"

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Rembrandt slipped a little money into the fellow's hand.

"At ten of the clock, masters, for the lesson is at eleven, and they bring in the corpse before that time."

"Good! We shall be here. Thanks, good fellow. Come, Albrecht."

The young men left the meat market and repaired to the studio in the warehouse. Their way led sometimes through very narrow streets whose gabled houses, leaning toward each other, almost shut out the sun, sometimes along broader thoroughfares in which a canal was the principal highway, but there was room on each bank for a driveway and foot-path. Little cared Rembrandt at this moment whether he walked in an alley or the finest of streets. Really, he was walking on air, for this new idea had taken complete possession of him.

"Albrecht, Albrecht! It must be so done, you see it, I am sure. If they knew I was there, they would pose, as I said. Now, no one has attempted this before. It is not in our Dutch art. Franz Hals even did not do it—nay, he did not try to do it. I am sure it can be done in that way. How paint life unless you see it? Oh, yes! What a glorious problem for a painter!"

"Now, Rembrandt, you are striding along at such a rate that I vow my legs are weary, and you are talking at such a rate that I vow my ears are weary. Calm yourself, man, and walk a little slower, or you'll have to seek another companion. We aren't near the studio yet, and I want to catch

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my breath. I wouldn't live in such a state of turmoil as do you for all the art in Christendom. Oh! man, for the sake of all the saints, especially St. Christopher, who walked well with a good stick, as I believe, let us take an even, quiet pace, and we will talk about your disguise for the morn."

"Well, well, I meant not to incommode you, Albrecht. I knew not that I was walking too swiftly. You are right, let us decide upon a disguise. You need none, for you are not known; but Dr. Tulp would know me if we are discovered, which I hope will not happen."

"Yea, but it may happen. Methinks, friend, a full mustache and chin whisker would be quite enough. None would know our Rembrandt thus—but the eyes, the eyes, my friend! I fear they will betray you. We can do naught about that except keep in the shadow as much as we can, and you can wear a hat that will cast a deep shade. Why, these Dutchmen always wear big hats! A cloak around you. I see! You are the German's friend! Why, Rembrandt, I know not when I have been so aroused in keenness for adventure. We will try it, and you shall paint the greatest of the guild pictures. I see it already. It will be grand, and you will be the most famous painter in Amsterdam."

"Albrecht, you are a noble fellow. You seem never to think of yourself, and I am always thinking of myself—or is it my work? Sometimes I cannot tell one from the other, but it matters not. We will do as you have said, and to-morrow, un-

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seen, unknown, I will study my doctor and his pupils."

"There is nothing noble about me, friend Rembrandt, but I am greatly interested, as I said; and when we Germans, even dreamers, are really forced into action, we become almost as impetuous as you are."

CHAPTER X

Saskia's Portrait Forgotten

THE next day Saskia, with Hendrik's wife, came again to the studio as she had promised. Not without effort had she come, for well she remembered what she had said, and well she knew that the painter who had so deeply stirred her had confessed an answering emotion. "I shall see him again," she thought, "and I will not be so unkind as I was before, if he speaks to me again with that ardent look in his great eyes. Ah, me! ah, me! what has come over me? Why did I not stay away another day? Is a maiden to be so lightly won? And much I fear me it has come to that. Perhaps he did not mean to woo me after all. Alas! If I were wrong—and yet, and yet, those eyes—the words he seemed about to speak when I left him! I shall know now I am sure. I can tell when I look into those eyes again."

She lifted the big brass knocker and let it fall once, twice, and then the servant came and opened the door.

"Is your master within?" said Saskia.

"I don't know, mistress. I've been grinding colors in the studio. He wasn't there, but perhaps he's down here. Come in, mistress, and set ye down. I'll go search him."

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Saskia, surprised and hesitating, entered. She could not believe that Rembrandt had forgotten about her coming—yet she trembled and her heart beat fast. She sat down on one of the high-backed, leather-cushioned chairs and waited. After a time the boy came back.

“No, mistress; he isn’t here, mistress. He and the German man went out, mistress, and I didn’t see ’em go, but the servant maid she did see ’em; but she said she hardly knew it was the master, because he had a beard on him, and his hat was down over his eyes, but she knew his curls, mistress. She said she did, and he’s not here, and there aren’t nobody knows where he’s gone, and he went secret like, but she saw him from behind the door.”

Saskia grew pale as death. With difficulty she rose from the chair and went toward the door. In a moment, however, her native pride and strong will nerved her, and indignation took the place of outraged tenderness. As they went homeward Saskia said, “Cousin, he has insulted me. How dared he? He knew I was coming, and he has gone away, and in disguise too, in disguise; I will never see him again.”

“Now, be not too impatient, Saskia. You know these painters are strange folk. It may be he had some sudden commission that he could not neglect. Now, I pray thee, do not give way to anger.”

“But in disguise, why in disguise? I know not what this may mean, but I do know he has not kept his faith with me, and I will see him no more—no, never again.”

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"Calm yourself, Cousin Saskia. You may do ill to him and yourself if you give way to anger."

"Be quiet, I pray thee. Is the daughter of Hombertus to be thus slighted? and that, too, when she humbled herself to pose for this painter? And he has gone, I dare say, to some place where he would not be known. It cannot be for a good purpose. No one disguises himself when his errand is good. And he forgot me, he forgot me; and yet his eyes yesterday! I see there is some woman whom he seeks to meet, and he takes disguise that he may meet her unknown to others. Ah! ah! it is true. Go, then. Never again shalt thou see Saskia's face."

The maiden spoke all this almost to herself. Her cousin heard not the half of it, but Saskia's agitation was only too clear, and betrayed her secret even to the dull mind of Hendrik's good-natured wife. She was distressed, as all good Dutch wives are when they see a love-affair crossed, but she could do nothing. By this time Saskia had become so certain that Rembrandt had played her false that she retired behind the walls of her pride, and not another word would she say. As she became a little cooler after the first heat of her anger, she knew well that she had betrayed herself, and at such a time, when Rembrandt had not spoken one word of love, though his looks had spoken for him. Mortification followed injured pride, and this outwardly light-hearted, but inwardly serious, maiden was in a mood that boded ill for Rembrandt, should he venture now to press his suit.

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But Rembrandt was thinking of nothing but his prospective adventure. With Albrecht he had left the studio in time to keep his appointment with the attendant at the meat market. He was on fire. The hope that by means of this disguise he might attain naturalness in his picture, such as had not been attained before, simply engrossed him. He could think of naught else. On the way to the meat market he spoke not one word. When he came there the attendant was awaiting them.

After protesting feebly, and receiving several florins to quiet his scruples, Hans opened a little door and led them through a secret passage leading to the lecture-room. It was that by which the bodies were brought in. The painter and his friend were easily enough concealed behind some tapestries that hung on the wall of the great vaulted room. By separating the tapestries a little it was easy to see what was going on, with small risk of discovery.

"Now, Hans," said Albrecht, "you will surely come back and let us out when it is all over."

"Surely, surely, my masters. Have no fear, but bide ye there until I come." Off he went in some haste, for it was nearly time to bring in the criminal's body that Dr. Tulp was to dissect as he lectured that day.

The young men remained behind the hangings, Rembrandt almost breathless with excitement, and even the calm Albrecht a good deal moved by the spirit of adventure.

They had not long to wait before they heard

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the heavy tread of the attendants in the passage, and soon these entered bearing their ghastly burden, which they placed on a table in the middle of the room. There was quite a space immediately around the table, and farther back the floor inclined upward, so that those behind might see. There were no chairs. At the foot of the table was a stand on which had been placed a large volume bound in sheepskin.

Presently Dr. Tulp entered. He wore a black gown with a broad white collar, a square-crowned black hat with a very broad brim, and on his hands were gloves of deerskin, with long gauntlets. Behind him came his pupils. There were but seven of them, and each of the seven seemed almost as full of thought as the master himself, at least so it seemed to Rembrandt at the first glance. Later, when Dr. Tulp began to talk, expound, and illustrate by skilful dissection, he saw that the professor towered far above the others. The fire of intellect blazed in his eyes. There was the majesty of knowledge in his broad white brow and in his noble bearing. Dr. Tulp stood by the corpse and opened the great volume which was at the foot of the table. By turns, commenting on the text and dissecting the muscles and tendons of the left arm, he became more and more fascinated with his subject, until the listening doctors crowded eagerly around, and each face was lit with kindling excitement as new facts were told, demonstrated, and grasped. Here, then, was the truth. Rembrandt was nearly wild because he could not sketch these eager faces on the

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spot in the very midst of this intensity of intellectual concentration. But he felt it. With the sympathy of genius he entered into the thought of these men, and with the painter's unforgetting eye he saw the scene. He caught its essential elements in meaning, and in form and color also. It is doubtful whether he could have painted the picture which was so soon to mark an era in Dutch art had he not thus, unseen himself, studied his subject as it really was in life.

As the lecture proceeded, Rembrandt became more and more fascinated. He could not see as clearly as he wished through the little opening between the hangings, and at last, forgetting everything but his subject, he bent forward, and his whole head appeared in the room. Naturally, it was rather startling to Dr. Tulp and his pupils to see the head of a stranger thus suddenly emerge from the tapestries. It was an age of conspiracies. Murder was common. Perhaps this man concealed there was some friend of the criminal resenting this insult to his body and seeking vengeance. None recognized Rembrandt because of the disguise. There was a sudden call for help, and all started for the door, but Rembrandt, seeing he was discovered, came out from behind the hangings, and tearing off the false beard and mustache, approached Dr. Tulp.

"You know me now, my friend, I am sure," he said. "I am Rembrandt. You sent me the commission to paint a picture which you would give the Surgeons' Guild, and I agreed to paint it, but when I came to think about it I could not see

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my way clear to paint it true to the life unless I could see and hear you and your pupils at your work as you really are. Forgive me, my friend. It was unworthy of me to deceive you, but, believe me, the purpose was a good one, and I have learned what I came for. I am ready to paint you all now. Will you forgive me?"

Dr. Tulp and the others had stopped at Rembrandt's first word, and looked upon him with astonishment, and some were gravely offended, for it was a serious matter thus to intrude upon the privacy of a dissecting-room.

Rembrandt's plea, however, mollified them, for it touched their self-esteem, showing as it did how highly the painter valued the subject that he had been called upon to paint, and what close study of it seemed to him needful.

"My friend Rembrandt," said Dr. Tulp, with dignity, "you do right to ask forgiveness, for you have violated our rules, and must, I fear me, have bribed our attendants, else could you never have gained entrance here. It would seem that the picture might have been painted without resort to such means."

"Indeed, indeed it could not," interrupted Rembrandt.

"Pardon, my friend," said the doctor. "I was about to say that in some cases the end justifies the means. Let it be so in this case. If you have taken us unawares, be sure that you paint a picture that will surprise the world."

"My dear Dr. Tulp," said Rembrandt, "I have another boon to ask. You have forgiven me.

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Will you please not search for the attendant who let me in? I deceived him with some story of relationship to the criminal whose body you were dissecting. Really, he is not to blame. Grant me this, I pray."

By this time the doctor was much mollified. After all, there was no great reason he should be offended, for it was only admiration of his skill, and a desire to know it better, that had caused Rembrandt to resort to such an artifice.

"Be it as you will, Rembrandt. I trust no harm is done, and I eagerly await the picture. When may we come to your studio?"

"Thank you! thank you! Come to-morrow, if you will—nay, perhaps better the day after, for I must needs sketch roughly what I have seen to-day before I begin upon the portraits."

"As you will." The doctor and his pupils moved with much dignity toward the door. Rembrandt followed them. He had forgotten all about Albrecht.

Meanwhile, the poor German had been keeping very close behind the hangings. There was no excuse for him if he were discovered, and he was shaking in his shoes—a foreigner too—what on earth would become of him if he were caught in such an act? Drops of cold perspiration stood on his brow, and the dreamer wished he had kept on dreaming, and not embarked with this hare-brained Rembrandt in such a wild adventure.

"And now he has forgotten me, I suppose, as he forgets others, and out he goes with the doctors, and there is nothing left here but the

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corpse. Ugh! ugh! Ach! ach! I like it not at all."

There was, however, nothing to do but wait for the old man to come for him. He had heard Rembrandt pray forgiveness for the attendant, and perhaps the old man would come back as he had promised. It was not long before the attendants came back and bore away the corpse. The old man opened the door for them and shut it after them, leaving Albrecht alone in the dismal room. Rembrandt soon thought again of Albrecht, but he knew how dangerous it would be to betray his presence there. He went on, therefore, for a way, talking with Dr. Tulp, until their paths separated, then he hastened back, as fast as he could, through back streets to the market, that he might gain a safe exit for Albrecht from his most uncomfortable position. The old man, however, had not forgotten his promise, and as soon as it seemed to him safe he had come back and opened the door of the secret passage that the young men might come forth. Great was his surprise when only one appeared.

"How now, how now! my master! What has come to the other? Now am I undone! They will put me in prison. Ah! Alas! that doctor has no mercy."

"Hans, I pray you be calm," said Albrecht. "No harm will come to you. My friend was discovered but I was not. He discovered himself and asked pardon for you and it was given.

"Ow! ow! never again will I be in such a bad business," said the frightened Hans. "Oh! the

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love of the gold! Oh! the mischief of it! What weak ones we are! Alas! alas!"

Just then Rembrandt entered the market, and the evil power of the gold that the old man was bemoaning soon soothed his troubled spirit again, especially when he was assured that no harm would come to him. The young men betook themselves in all haste to the studio—none the worse for the adventure, though Albrecht trembled a little when he thought how narrow had been his escape from really serious danger.

CHAPTER XI

Albrecht Intercedes

WHEN they arrived at their home, Jan the little boy who ground the colors for Rembrandt and his pupils, opened the door, and, almost before they had entered, began to blurt out: "Please, master, there was one here, master, and she wanted you, master, she did—she did—she did—and she said, she said——"

"What is the matter with you, you young rascal?" said Rembrandt. "Can't you tell me plainly who it was? It was a lady, I think you tried to say?"

"Yes, master, a lady as I said, and she wanted—she wanted—Ow—I don't know what she wanted—but she wanted you."

"What was the lady's name, you fool?"

"Name, master, name? Nay, she had no name. I mean I knew not her name; but, master, I know'd her, I did, 'cause it was her master was painting in the study down here the other day."

"My God, Albrecht," said Rembrandt, "what have I done? It was Saskia, and I was to paint her and I forgot? Yet it was the dearest wish of my heart to look upon her face again. What ails me, friend? Am I losing my mind? Oh! this art! this art! She is a hard mistress—she brooks no rival."

REMBRANDT

“ I know not, indeed, what ails you, friend Rembrandt—but I do think you are most curiously forgetful, and it seems to me somewhat unmannerly. I give you my word you will find it not easy to make your peace with the fair damsel. Slighted beauty is not easily pacified. Forgetfulness is but a poor excuse when beauty is forgotten, and perhaps love, too, for I must say you are powerfully moved about this matter. Ho! Ho! I thought you only wanted to paint her. Your heart has flamed up right suddenly, my friend. It has leapt even now straight into your eyes and your cheeks. I’m sorry for you, poor fellow, for you are indeed in a pretty plight. Perhaps it’s a judgment on you for forgetting me there behind the hangings.”

“ Albrecht, I beseech you, torment me no more. I am suffering more than I can tell you. Jan! What was said to the lady?”

“ Said to her about what, master?”

“ Why about me, of course, you idiot.”

“ Oh! ah! about you? Said to her? Oh! I said naught. I know naught, but Gretchen—you know—the maid, she was behind the door, she was, and she saw you go out, she said, and she told the lady, she did, you’d gone and you had a false beard on, she did.”

“ Oh! horrible, this is worse and worse. What in the wide world can Saskia think? What possible excuse can she make for me? Oh! how can I ever make my peace? Tell me, Albrecht, tell me what to do.”

“ I am deeply sorry, my dear friend, for I per-

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ceive that you are suffering as well as ashamed, and it is indeed a very delicate and difficult matter. I must think it over. It would be best, I think, for me to go to Hendrik's and see if I can learn aught of the lady's mood before you venture there. I shrewdly guess she is sorely angered, and it would not be well for you to see her when she is in such a mood, but I will go thither and find out."

"Thank you. Oh! thank you. You are indeed a friend, Albrecht. It is best as you say. The lady has just cause for anger. Woe is me that I have given her that cause. I would liever have offended anyone else in all the world but her. Oh! the selfishness of this art!"

Albrecht departed forthwith on his friendly errand. Rembrandt paced up and down the room for awhile, greatly agitated, but in spite of his mortification and the growing power of love, made all the stronger by the possibility that it might not receive its reward, his passion for painting was still upon him, and he went to his easel to make a first sketch for the picture which was to make him famous.

Meanwhile, Albrecht took his slow way along the narrow streets and by the canals, where there was more light, but not much more footpath. The wealth of the Indies was about him in the ships. Why! there seemed realized the fabulous tales about the Spaniard. The young German paused and looked about him. Almost he forgot his errand. Perhaps he would have forgotten it altogether, but just then a young woman passed

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him. Her cloak was drawn close about her face, and she was clearly trying to conceal herself so far as possible. Yet Albrecht caught a glimpse of her face, and in an instant his dreaming left him. "I saw that face in St. Sebald's church. Ever since I have longed to see it again. Who can she be? I will follow her."

Herein was manifest unfaithfulness to his friend's quest—first in the dreaming and now in the mad pursuit of a damsel to whom Albrecht had never said one word. In one way, Albrecht was an artist. A picture once seen was never forgotten, and the impression of a face was still more lasting. He followed the maiden, who walked very quickly, and, as good luck would have it, she went direct toward Hendrik's print shop. "By all the saints!" said Albrecht, "but this is most curious. Now, how can such things be? I wonder what that beauteous maiden, whose face gleamed out upon me in St. Sebald's church, has to do with Hendrik. No matter, I shall find out in a minute. Ah! she enters there. 'Tis well; I follow."

The young girl went into Hendrik's shop, still keeping her cloak close drawn around her. Albrecht entered a moment later. On seeing a stranger the lady drew her cloak still closer about her. She purchased one of the Dürer prints, which Albrecht himself had brought to Hendrik, and then abruptly left the place without speaking one word. Albrecht did not dare to follow her, though he longed to do so, for she was alone, and that was a strange thing for a gentlewoman of

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those days. Certainly she was a gentlewoman. None other could so bear herself. There was a mystery here.

"Hendrik," said Albrecht, "know you that young woman?"

"Nay, friend Albrecht, I know her not. How should I know all the women that come in here? Lord help you, man, do you think I can keep track of the wenches that come traipsing along the streets?"

"Silence, Hendrik; speak not disrespectfully of that young woman. She is a lady, and, if I mistake me not, high-born, albeit she came here without an attendant. These are strange times, friend Hendrik, and it is ill judging by appearances. I would see her again. I am sure I have seen her once. I will find her. She may need help. You ought to know about her if she has been here before. I am disgusted with you."

"Ho! Ho! Ho! Herr Albrecht! This is too much for one day. Even a stupid Dutchman like me must needs laugh at these love-lorn maids and lads. Ho! Ho! Ha! Ha! why it's only a little while since my cousin came here, angry. Oh! How angry! My good wife says it is a lovers' quarrel, and God knows what it's all about—something, if I can remember, about your scape-grace friend Rembrandt, the painter, having gone off in disguise to run away with somebody. Oh! Lord! Oh! Lord! In the name of all that's sensible and quiet and peaceful and agreeable to Dutchmen, why should he want to make such a

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turmoil when, as I verily believe, he might have had Saskia for the asking?"

"Thank you heartily, Hendrik. You have recalled me to myself and to my errand. I have come even now from Rembrandt, who is distressed beyond measure because he forgot an appointment to paint Saskia's portrait. She is here, then, and you say she is very angry?"

"Angry! Well, friend Albrecht, you'd better not approach her if you come from him, for surely you would rue the day."

Just then the door of the shop was opened quickly by a young man who seemed to be in a state of great excitement. He was one of Hendrik's clerks, but his ambition was to be a doctor, and sometimes he stole away to the meat-market where Dr. Tulp lectured, and talked with the attendants, seeking to learn what was going on in the great school of medicine. He had been there this day, and had heard all about the finding of Rembrandt in the lecture-room. He was full to brimming over with the news.

"Why! Master Hendrik," he said, "what think you has happened? The painter, Rembrandt, whom you know so well!—why he was in disguise, and he was behind the hangings in the lecture-room and he forgot himself, and looked out and he was discovered, and Dr. Tulp was much offended, and it might have gone hard with the painter, but he said he was to paint the doctor, that Dr. Tulp had given him a commission to do it, and he could not paint the picture unless he saw them at their work, and they did not know

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he was there, and—and—yes that was it. He disguised himself that he might not be known, though he hoped he would not be found out, but he was, because of his own fault, and—and—oh! what is the rest? I don't know, they are all excited—but Rembrandt is forgiven and he has begun on his picture, I think."

"This is strange news," said Hendrik; "what mad prank will your artist friend play next, I wonder. But, Albrecht, a word with you alone. Leave us, Casper."

The young man went out somewhat crestfallen because his exciting news had not caused more comment.

"You say, Albrecht, that you are come from Rembrandt to find what Saskia's mood is and to pave the way for a meeting between them that this quarrel may be settled. A moment ago I had not thought it possible, for I heard her vow she would never see him again. But it was the disguise she was harping on. Now we know why he took the disguise. If she knows that it may make a difference, though there is still the fault of the forgetfulness—but she may forgive that when she hears of the great commission, and of the glory that may come from it. What think you, friend? Would you see her now and tell her of these matters?"

"Indeed, most gladly would I," said Albrecht, "Methinks I see a way to soften the irate damsel; though indeed she has just cause of offence. But, Hendrik, please, please find out about the lady who was here but now."

REMBRANDT

"Albrecht, you are forgetting your errand. I am a blunt man and I tell you you are no true friend if you do not forget your own affairs for the time and seek to smooth the way for Rembrandt. I promise you it is no easy matter. Here Casper," said Hendrik, calling the young man whom he had just sent away. "Go up to Mistress Saskia's room and tell her there is one here who would fain speak with her on a matter of great import."

The young man went and soon returned saying that Saskia would receive the visitor. Albrecht accordingly went up the narrow stair and finding an open door in a little passage, entered, and was received with great dignity by Saskia, who had become perfectly calm and icily cold the moment she looked at Albrecht's face. She suspected his purpose as she looked at him, and was on her guard immediately.

"Greetings from the heart to you, fair lady?" said the courtly German.

"I thank you and give greeting to you also, Herr von Stoltzing. You are very welcome. Sit ye down. Take yonder chair with the cushion. It is easier than those carved, straight-backed enemies of comfort."

"I thank you, Mistress von Ulenburg," said Albrecht, seating himself in an upholstered chair, whose covering was of Flemish tapestry. Albrecht was greatly embarrassed. He hardly knew how to begin. Indeed, his errand was a delicate and difficult one, and the lady's cold manner was by no means reassuring.

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“The weather is unpleasant to-day, Herr von Stoltzing. I fear you will not like our Dutch climate. It must be a most unpleasant contrast to the sunshine of the Rhineland and Nuremberg. The sun is niggardly with his rays here in Holland.”

“Nay, lady, I care not about it. Not at all, oh, not at all. It is a beautiful climate, oh, most beautiful.”

“But, my dear sir,” said Saskia, laughing heartily, “surely you know not what you are saying. Why, it is raining enough to drown you, and we have not seen the sun for a week.”

“Yes, yes, that is true indeed. I had forgotten about the rain. Yes, truly, it is raining; but there might be worse things than rain, you know. Methinks the climate is good, and I care not whether it is or no. I crave pardon, mistress—in truth I was not thinking about it, and I fear I am rude—but there is a matter whereof I would fain speak with you. I come with—I am the bearer of—nay, I would explain something to you in which my friend Rembrandt has deep interest.”

“Do you mean you are here as a messenger to me from the painter Rembrandt?”

“Yes, yes, I suppose that is it. I hardly know what I am, or where I am, but I think that must be true.”

“Then get you hence directly,” said Saskia. “He has insulted me, and I will have naught to do with him or his messenger. He makes it all the worse by sending one in his place because he dared not come himself. I despise him.”

REMBRANDT

“Pardon me—one word I beg. There is something here not understood, and I must explain it. You must listen to me. I will not see unhappiness come from such a trifling matter, and I know that Rembrandt is breaking his heart about it.”

Saskia’s face softened a little as these words were spoken, and she said, in a more gentle tone, “Go on, then, I will listen to you. I do not wish to be unjust.”

“Most dear and honored lady, I do not wish my friend to be misunderstood, for I love him and value his happiness as I do my own. It is true that he has given you grievous cause of offence in that he forgot his appointment, but surely there was some excuse, because on the day before he received the most important commission of his life—to paint Dr. Tulp and his pupils in a Doelen picture that the doctor wanted to give to the Surgeons’ Guild, and his brain was fairly on fire with it. I verily believe he forgot his own existence, almost forgot everything but the picture, and how best to paint it.”

“Oh, has he indeed received such a commission?” said Saskia, eagerly, her interest overcoming for the moment her offended pride.

“Indeed he has, Mistress von Ulenburg, and he was ingenious enough to devise a way of getting himself in disguise into the hall where the doctor lectures, that he might see and hear the doctor and his pupils unknown to them, and he succeeded, nor would he have been discovered except for his own impetuosity. He became so excited that he leaned out from behind the hang-

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ings, and then there was a terrible time. As he was disguised, no one knew him, and they thought it was some conspiracy. So he had to take off his disguise and explain the matter, and the doctor forgave him."

Saskia's face brightened at once as she heard the story of the disguise; but her pride had possessed her again, and she would admit no interest in the matter. Nevertheless, Albrecht was shrewd enough to see that he had made an impression upon her.

"Indeed, indeed, how very ingenious. Yes, they told me he had gone away in disguise. It seemed a strange prank to play. I understood it not. I am glad to hear about it. I trust the picture will be a good one."

"May I tell Rembrandt that he is forgiven?"

"You may tell him nothing of the kind. What matters it? Why, this artist is so engrossed that it would not interest him one way or the other. What is the use of troubling him with such trifles? He would forget all about it the minute after you told him."

"Nay, nay, truly it is not so. You know him not. It is true he forgets everything but his work sometimes, but his heart is true, and it is true to you, as I believe."

"What say you, sir? Methinks in matters of the heart, if such are here involved, it would be better for the party in interest to speak for himself. You are somewhat officious, Herr von Stoltzing, and I think this conversation has lasted quite long enough."

REMBRANDT

“Ah, ah! he may speak for himself, then,” said Albrecht, delighted. “That privilege will be dear, indeed. Pardon me if I have offended, I thought not of myself. It was my friend’s cause I had at heart. Thank you for that word, ‘he may speak for himself.’ That will bring joy to his heart.”

“I said not that I would see him,” said Saskia, somewhat confused. “I said only that a man should plead his own cause.”

“You will see him, you will, I am sure. Your heart is kind. You are not cruel. I will tell him all.”

“Tell the truth, sir, and no more than the truth,” said Saskia, rising and speaking still with dignity. She knew she was half-conquered and she knew why. Her heart had been on Albrecht’s side, and then, too, Rembrandt could not have chosen a better envoy. Albrecht’s gentle nature made him an admirable peace-maker.

He saluted Saskia most courteously and left her. His spirits were light because he had succeeded. He paused a moment in the shop, and said to Hendrik, “I think all will be well. The lady is not made of stone—but, friend Hendrik, forget not about the lady who was here when I came. Find out, I pray thee, who she is, for surely I must and will see her again. Farewell.”

CHAPTER XII

Too Late

ALBRECHT went joyfully back to the studio in the warehouse. He was the bearer of good news, and his own heart was fluttering like a caged bird. That face, that exquisite face, those deep blue eyes, that brown hair that rippled softly over the low white brow—it was the face of his dreams seen once in St. Sebald's Church, never forgotten, and now seen again in this foreign city! Ah, he would find her! He would be no laggard in love. Would that his quest were even now begun, but his errand of friendship must first be done.

He found Rembrandt where he had left him, before his easel, on which was a sketch for the anatomy lesson nearly completed. It was so masterly, so original, that Albrecht started back in amazement and admiration. Almost he forgot those tender love-affairs that had so engrossed him, and for a moment was nearly as absorbed in the power of the picture as the master himself.

"Good God! What a masterpiece!" he said, half aloud. He might as well have spoken at the top of his voice, Rembrandt had not heard the door open, nor was he conscious of Albrecht's presence. He went on, and on, with sure touch, every stroke true, and tellingly effective. Albrecht

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himself felt the spell of the painter's genius so strongly upon him that for a time he spoke not a word, but breathlessly watched the hand of the master until the sketch, already nearly done, was quite completed.

Then Rembrandt started back from his canvas, and backed straight into Albrecht, who was standing close behind him.

"Ha! What's this! who's here?" said the painter, like one suddenly startled out of a dream. "Oh! it's you, Albrecht! I knew not you were here. I have made my sketch, friend. What think you of it? Is not the life there?"

"It is a masterpiece, Rembrandt. But have you naught else to ask me?"

"By all that is dear and tender, yes, I have, and much. Did you see her? What said she? Is there any hope? Is she as beautiful and merry and gracious as before? Oh! Albrecht, hasten man, what on earth ails you? In heaven's name speak on, speak quickly, I can't wait, speak, I say."

"Softly, softly, Herr Painter. I can't talk while you are talking, and I can't answer fifty questions at once, and I didn't think a minute ago you seemed so impatient about my tidings. Now it seems you have a little interest in them. Verily I thought you had forgotten all about me, and perhaps about the lady too. May it please your high mightiness, I'll take my time; I'm somewhat out of breath and I want a horn of beer."

"Curses on your beer! Jan, Ho! there, a horn of beer for Herr Albrecht, and some cheese and a sausage. Eat and drink if you needs must—but

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for the Lord's sake, man, tell me what she said, and what you did. Tell me, I say, tell me quickly."

"Very well, then, since you are so eager. Sit ye down yonder. Ah! thanks, Jan." As the lad brought in the refreshments. "That is very good." Albrecht sat down and took a long draught from the great drinking-horn, while Rembrandt strode up and down quite overcome by impatience that was fast rising to anger.

"Well, man; will you never have done drinking and eating? Perhaps you will deign, after awhile, to tell me what she said and how she looked."

"Yes, yes, pardon I beg. I see now your impatience, though upon my honor it was not noticeable when I came in. She's very angry, Rembrandt, and none knows better than yourself that she has good cause to be."

"I know that. Fool that I was to treat her thus! But is there hope still? Albrecht, tell me, is there no kindness left and no forgiveness?"

"Now it is very hard to tell about that. You see, my friend, I don't understand women very well. I always told you I was a dreamer, even about art, which I love best of all things in the world. You should have sent someone else on such an errand, for it was not an easy one, I promise you. Ah! but that is fine beer," said Albrecht, emptying the horn.

"Tell me what she said. Trifle with me no longer. This is no jesting matter."

"Patience. Now what did she say? Oh, I remember, she said you ought to come to plead your own cause and not send another."

REMBRANDT

“Did she indeed say that?” said Rembrandt. “Ah, then, there is hope. She will see me, and that is nearly like forgiveness.”

“She did not say she would see you, and she was very angry, and she may be angry again when she thinks over what she said, but you must go yourself next time. I’ve had all I want of it, yes, and more than enough. I was so embarrassed before her that my tongue clove to the roof of my mouth, and I thought I could not say anything; indeed, I don’t well remember what I did say, but I know I blurted out something, and I do well remember that at the end she said that about your pleading your own cause. Go your ways to her straightway, and the devil take me if I mix in your matters after this. I’ve enough of my own to look after.”

“Oho! Oho! you have, have you? Are you too caught in the fatal meshes of love’s net? Methinks, friend Albrecht, there is an unwonted activity about you; I have but now noticed it; but I should have seen it before had I not been so engrossed in my own affairs. Tell me, who is the lovely lady who has so suddenly aroused my German dreamer?”

“Nay, Rembrandt, I cannot tell you, for I know not myself. All I know is that she is the most beautiful woman the sun ever shone upon, and I am sure she is the loveliest.”

“Hold on, friend,” said Rembrandt. “Have done with your wild talk. You must be verily mad with love to use such words when you have just come from Saskia’s presence.”

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“Oh! I beg your pardon,” said Albrecht. “I meant not to hurt your feelings; but really tell me, have you seen her of whom I speak? Can you tell me aught of her? She seems a stranger here. I saw her once in St. Sebald’s Church, and I have seen her in my dreams ever since. Tell me, do you know her?”

Rembrandt burst into a fit of hearty laughter, and when at last his mirth subsided he said: “Never saw I the like of this. I have heard of the folly of lovers, but this goes beyond belief. How in the name of all that is sensible can I have the least idea of whom you are talking? Because her beauty, as you say, has overcome you, you seem to think all the world is possessed by it, and the impression of this peerless damsel’s face would never be forgotten by any who might chance to see her. Ha! ha! my sides ache with laughing. But never mind, I go direct to Hendrik’s, and if anyone knows about this wandering maiden it would surely be he. I owe you something, for you have done me a good turn, and I will find out, if I can, about her.”

“Thank you from my heart,” said Albrecht, with some confusion. “I was very foolish, as you say. I—I did not think. I thought perhaps you might have seen her. Oh! I don’t know what I did think. But have done with your laughing. There are serious matters here for both of us. You need not be too sure that Saskia will see you. I did not say she would, but I think perhaps she may.”

“I will see her,” said Rembrandt, “and directly.”

REMBRANDT

He donned the broad-brimmed black hat which he habitually wore, and threw a long black cloak about his shoulders. Then he strode toward the door with impetuous haste.

"Forget not my errand, friend, I pray thee," said Albrecht. "I fear you will think of naught else but Saskia."

"Nay, I will not forget," said Rembrandt. "I am not quite so heartless as you think. I will try to do for you even as you did for me. Farewell."

Rembrandt followed the road that Albrecht had taken, threading the narrow streets, overshadowed by the gabled houses which leant toward each other, and taking at times the broader and more open ways by the banks of the canals. At last he reached Hendrik's shop. He was filled with the ardor of a great passion, now fully known to his heart, and the glory and the joy of it quite transformed him. His face was radiant as he reached forth his hand to Hendrik and said, abruptly, as was his habit: "Where is Saskia? I would see her."

"Well! well! friend Rembrandt, you seem impatient. Ah, I see. Youth and love brook no waiting. Right sorry am I, friend, to say she is not here, but it is true. She left here but now, and I think she has gone to Franeker to see her sister Antje, who has not been well of late."

"Oh! by all the gods, I curse my folly. Why came I not instead of sending Albrecht? Fool that I am! Selfish brute that I am! It may be that I have lost her. Hendrik, was she angry when she went? Saw you her face? Said she aught of me?"

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“Now, now be calm, Rembrandt. You are always sizzling and sputtering like a potato in a frying-pan. Can’t you wait a day or two to see the lady? I believe it would be better for you. Her face, you say? and did she seem angry? I am no ladies’ man. I am only blunt Hendrik. I have a good eye for prints, but a poor one for fair ladies’ looks. I’ faith though, friend, I believe she did look sober, and now, let me see—yes, methinks I did see her cheeks were red and her eyes were brighter than common. But she said naught of you. I know not what excited her. Perhaps it was the print-seller’s visit—the young man from Nuremberg. He was here a long time. Does he love her, too? Nay, though, I think not, for he seemed to care much about another one, who was here when he came.”

“Talk not nonsense, Hendrik. Albrecht came on my errand to Saskia. Would that I had come myself! How long will she stay at Franeker?”

“Indeed, I know not; but some little time, I do believe, for her sister is ailing, as I said.”

“Oh, this is cruel. I must wait then, and this misunderstanding still between us. I cannot leave here now, for Dr. Tulp comes to the studio tomorrow, and I must paint him for my lesson in anatomy. How can I keep calm enough to paint at all?”

“Now, look you here, friend Rembrandt, I am not very wise, I know, but I am married, and I must needs know more about women than you do, and I tell you, friend, Saskia has been angry with you, and she is not yet willing, as I think, to

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see you. The best thing you can do, believe me, is to paint this picture. You know what I think of your work. I am sure it will make you famous. You will be the talk of the town, and when Saskia comes back she will hear your name from all and she will be touched. Oh! these women love great and strong men! Now, do take my advice. Go paint your picture and put in it all your genius. It will plead your cause better than you can do just now. That's a long speech, and a very artful one for plain Hendrik. I couldn't have said so much except because I love you."

"Perhaps you are right, my friend, but it is a weary waiting."

"Come back here in the dining-room, and have a bumper of Rhenish to refresh you after your walk, and your disappointment."

"Nay, I care naught for the wine—but hold, on second thought I believe I will go with you, for there is another matter of which I would speak to you. I had almost forgotten it; Albrecht said I would forget, but I have not. Come, I am with you."

The two went into the dining-room, which was just back of the shop. The living-rooms were above. It was the custom for the Dutch merchants, even of so high a class as Hendrik, to live in their place of business, nor did that mean that the living-rooms were not often very beautiful and luxurious. Hendrik's dining-room, although it opened out of the shop, was a most beautiful room. It was wainscoted two-thirds of the way to the raftered ceiling and the wains-

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coting was of Spanish oak. Above, reaching to the rafters, was gilded Spanish leather, in that day thought to be the most splendid wall decoration, unless the finest tapestries might be excepted. There were some beautiful glasses from Bohemia and Venice on the chimney-piece. Hendrik took down two of these, and set them on the massive dining-table with great richly carved legs that bulged out so much at the top as to make those who sat near them somewhat uncomfortable.

Presently the servant-maid brought the wine, and with it the inevitable sausage.

"Rembrandt," said Hendrik. "Not one word until you have tasted my Rhenish. Now, I don't know much except about prints, but I know a good Rhenish. Ha! ha! you are lucky to have a glass of it. It was sent me down the Rhine by a German from Sternberg. He had bought a print from me and could not pay—but, by my troth, friend, the wine is much better than the print. Pledge me in a bumper, Rembrandt, and then you can talk all you please."

"Well, then! here's your health!" and Rembrandt raised the beautiful glass and took a little of the wine, which was, indeed, of a royal vintage. "You praised it not too much, Hendrik. It is a noble wine. Now, I promised Albrecht I would ask you about the young woman he saw here. She seemed a stranger. Know you aught of her?"

"He asked me himself to find out about her. I suppose he forgot that. Nay, I know nothing.

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I don't go following people about the streets. I sell her a print and she takes it and goes. She pays for it and all is well ; what care I about the wench."

"But you can find out, Hendrik. You care for me and for Albrecht, even if you do not care for her. If she comes again let her be followed and her dwelling-place discovered. Albrecht would see her. It is of deep importance to him."

"Ah, well. It's too bad to trouble me with such matters. I'm no match-maker. But be it as you say. I can tell this much—she is a German, and she has not been long in Amsterdam. Why she came I know not, nor know I her name—but I will do my best and I will send you word when I have anything to tell."

"Thanks, kind Hendrik, and now I must go. It is late, and I must prepare for the work of to-morrow."

CHAPTER XIII

The Anatomy Lesson Begun

REMBRANDT went home with a heavy heart. Saskia's sudden departure filled him with misgivings, for well he knew she had gone that she might avoid a meeting with him. Nor had he cheerful news for his friend Albrecht. Nevertheless his face brightened as he thought of Hendrik's advice. Yes! he would paint the picture with all his might. He would make his name a household word in Amsterdam, and Saskia should hear of it and be proud and her heart would be satisfied. Cheered by this thought the painter strode on, so absorbed in his dreams that he took no heed of anything about him. It was dusk as he neared the studio. Just before he reached it a young woman passed him. As she saw him she drew her cloak closely about her face and walked onward more rapidly. Rembrandt turned and looked at her receding figure. There was something about her that awakened interest. Her bearing was different from that of the ordinary Dutch girls, and then it was strange that she should be out alone as evening drew near, if she was a lady, and she certainly seemed to be. In an instant it flashed upon his mind that possibly this was the same mysterious lady who had captivated

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Albrecht, and quick as thought Rembrandt turned and followed her. "I will at least see her face," he thought, "and then I can tell, that is, if she is as beautiful as he says."

The lady walked quickly, but Rembrandt gained upon her, and soon came so near that she heard his steps and knew that she was followed. She quickened her pace almost to a run, but it was of no avail, for the artist was already at her side.

Seeing that escape was hopeless she turned and faced her pursuer with perfect dignity and courage.

Out of the gathering dusk flashed upon Rembrandt one of the most beautiful faces he had ever seen. Had it not been that his heart was full of Saskia he would have said that never had he seen such beauty.

"Who are you, sir, that dare follow me in this unmannerly way? Would you affright a lonely maiden? You seem a gentleman, albeit you are not acting as beseems noble blood. Leave me at once or I will call the guard." This would not have been difficult, for they were near the Dam, and the guard-house of the Civil Guard was close at hand.

"I humbly crave your pardon, fair lady," said Rembrandt. "Upon my honor I meant you no harm, but I thought perhaps you might be the lady who was in Hendrik's print-store this morning, the one whom my dearest friend Albrecht saw there, Albrecht the German, who has come here but lately, and he had seen you once before at St. Sebald's Church in Nuremberg. Now that

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I have seen your face I am sure that you are indeed the maiden of whom he spoke."

"Your words, sir, are as strange as your actions. Are these your Amsterdam manners, that a gentlewoman is to be followed through the streets and accosted by a stranger? Fie and for shame, sir. Hie you home and repent. You shall know naught of me, nor shall your German friend, whose manners I trust are better than yours, if it is true, as you say, that he comes from my own loved land. Begone, sir, and at once," and she turned toward the guard-house.

Rembrandt had no choice as to what to do. Go he must, and go he did. Somewhat ashamed he was as he went back again toward the studio, for again had his impetuosity put him in a position which was by no means agreeable. However, there was no help for it, and at least he had seen the lady and had found her near to his own home. She must have been there for some purpose, and perhaps she would come again if she had not been too much frightened.

Albrecht was impatiently awaiting him. "What news, Rembrandt? Tell me quickly."

There was a twinkle in Rembrandt's eye. He loved a jest, and remembering how Albrecht had treated him in the morning, he resolved to be even with him.

"Oho, friend Albrecht! It is you who are impatient this time, I perceive, and it is I who am hungry and thirsty, for I have had a weary time and I am heavy-hearted. Jan, some beer and sausage for us both."

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"Heavy-hearted, you say? Then you bring not good tidings. Did Hendrik know naught about her? Tell me, I pray."

"Wait until I get my breath and refresh myself. Ah, there is the beer! That is well; I am somewhat overheated. I have been walking very rapidly. I might almost say I have been running."

"Well, well, take your beer, in God's name. Running, you say? What on earth were you running for? Speak, I pray you."

"Oh, Albrecht, she is gone; gone to Franeker to see her sister, they say. But I could not see her, nor can I go there, for I must paint to-morrow. Dr. Tulp comes, you know."

"Yes, yes; to be sure—so he does. I had forgotten it. She has gone to Franeker, you say? How did you find that out? Hendrik told you, I suppose. Did he tell you her name? Oh, tell me what is her name!"

"Why, you great idiot, have you forgotten the name of Saskia? You must be dreaming again, as is your wont."

"Saskia, Saskia. Oh, yes, I see! I thought not of her. Oh, of course you went to see her. I had forgotten. To be sure—I beg your pardon. Saskia, yes; and you saw her not? I am very sorry, but you will see her soon. It is better you should not see her just yet."

"So said Hendrik, but it is weary waiting when I have not made my peace. Nevertheless, I will paint with all my might, for I have hope that my work will make her proud of me."

"Yes, Rembrandt, it will. I am sure of it. I

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sympathize with you from my heart, but now, my dear friend, will you not tell me a word of that other?"

"Ay, Albrecht, that will I. I saw her but now at the corner of this very street. I am sure it was she, for I followed her, and as I overtook her she turned and I saw her face. She is indeed beautiful, as you said, and she is brave and high-spirited. I was forced to leave in some confusion, for she was near the guard-house and she threatened to have the civic guard on me for pursuing her in the streets. So I found not her name, nor her dwelling-place. You must e'en bide your time, friend Albrecht, and next time it would be better for you, as it would have been for me, to take up your own quest."

"Oh! I will find her," said the German, ardently. "My heart tells me so; but it is galling that you came so near, and yet failed to find her dwelling-place."

The next morning, quite early, Dr. Tulp came to the studio. He was attired in his full academic costume—cloak and gloves, broad white collar, and broad-brimmed black hat. He looked very dignified, noble, and above all, thoughtful. He was a perfect type of the intellectual man of his time, and his face at once emphasized the keynote of Rembrandt's picture, which had already been struck in the dissecting-room—the note of intellect, intense eager thought, which was to permeate the whole work.

"I greet you, Rembrandt," said the learned doctor, "and I hope that your somewhat unwar-

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ranted liberties of the other day have put you in the mood to paint this picture. To tell you the truth I set much store by it, for I have long had it in mind to do this for the Surgeons' Guild, and I am most anxious that it should be a fit commemoration of my long and arduous labors in the cause of medicine."

"Most honored doctor," said Rembrandt, "will you be good enough to step into the studio, and see the sketch which I have to-day made for the picture?"

"Gladly, Rembrandt, gladly; and if I have any criticism to make, I trust you will receive it in good part, remembering the great personal interest I have in this work."

"Nay, doctor. Grateful indeed would I be for any helpful comment."

So saying Rembrandt opened the door that led into the studio where he had begun to paint Saskia. Dr. Tulp entered, and the large sketch in charcoal stood upon the easel directly in front of him.

Involuntarily the grave and dignified doctor started back, and lifted one hand in a gesture of amazement. He saw in a moment that no guild picture like this had ever been painted. Where was the banqueting table? Where were the banners? Where were the meats and pies and fruits, the wine and the beer? Not one of these things to be seen. It was unheard of. Nobody ever painted guild pictures without such accessories. And there surely was the corpse on the table, and he himself in the act of dissecting it. Why! this



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would be a terrible picture, but how fascinating ! In a moment the keen mind of the doctor perceived the power of the work. If he had not been a man of liberal thought, he would have revolted against so abrupt a departure from all the received canons of this branch of art ; but his trained intellect grasped at once something of the artist's meaning, and he perceived that if this was a new departure it was likely to be a famous one.

Dr. Tulp was perfectly silent for some minutes, rapt in contemplation of the sketch, while Rembrandt eagerly studied his face, noting with pleasure the first expression of amazement, then the growing interest kindling in the doctor's great black eyes, then the concentration of thought, the effort to solve this new problem and determine what art like this might mean.

Dr. Tulp spoke at last. "Rembrandt, I knew your power, else would I not have given you this commission, but I confess I knew not your originality. I say to you in all frankness, nothing so unusual, and nothing so intensely real, and I may add nothing so intellectual, has been as yet attempted in Dutch art. Now I wonder not at your coming to the dissecting-room. You could not thus have painted the picture otherwise. I congratulate you from my heart. You have understood and painted our very lives—but, Rembrandt, the corpse there in the foreground?—Will it not make the picture ghastly and horrible?"

"Fear not, honored doctor, I shall so paint it that it will not absorb attention, but rather will lend interest to the faces about it, being a palpa-

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ble cause for the intensity of their expressions. Moreover I shall make it a note of fine color, although it is a corpse."

"Rembrandt, I admire your firmness of purpose, and your proud confidence in yourself. Moreover I perceive the genius that is here. Art is not indeed my profession, but I know somewhat of it, and I believe if you successfully complete this picture in this most extraordinary and unheard of way, you will be the most famous man in Holland, provided enough people can be found who will understand your work. Go on, then, in God's name. Do with me as you will. I leave all to you. I am not capable of suggestion in the presence of such a conception. It would ill become me to confuse you even by a word. I am sorry that I spoke of the corpse, but the idea of placing it as you have done seemed so entirely out of the common that it fairly overcame me, and I spoke before I thought—a thing I rarely do."

"How can I thank you enough for your words of appreciation?" said Rembrandt. "I am not worthy of such praise from such a man. But now we must proceed. I wish to paint your portrait first, as it is the central point of attraction, and then I hope the other doctors will come, one by one, and I will paint them as I have grouped them here. Will you be good enough to stand yonder—there in the light of that north window. There is a table here. Jan, bring in the table from the other room—Albrecht will help you."

The pose was soon arranged exactly as Rem-

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brandt had sketched it from his vivid remembrance of the scene in the dissecting-room. "Bring that stand with the big book on it, Jan. I have it ready there in the other room. Place it at the foot of the table. Ah! that is as it should be. Now, Albrecht, good friend, lie down there on the table as nearly as you can in the position of the corpse."

"Ugh! Ugh! friend Rembrandt," said the German. "I hope you are not going to make a corpse of me. I am not yet ready to take that part."

"Oh! Albrecht, you will have your jest. You know I must have a body there or I cannot get my drawing and my lights and shades as they should be."

"Very well then, as long as I am to be a body and not a corpse, I don't mind." Albrecht accordingly lay flat on the table and Dr. Tulp stood behind. Rembrandt put a pair of scissors in the doctor's right hand, with the point of them on Albrecht's left arm. He placed the doctor's left arm in a gesture of emphasis.

"There," said Rembrandt, delighted, "that is exact, and the light is admirable. Quiet, now, while I paint."

His colors were already ground, and his palette and brushes ready. He painted with the most intense absorption, and with great rapidity. At last his subject could no longer endure the constrained position and begged for a rest, which would have been given long before, had not Rembrandt quite forgotten that there was any need of rest while he was painting.

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"I beg a thousand pardons," said Rembrandt, starting up from his easel. "It is a shame that I am so forgetful, so neglectful of your comfort. Come, now, let us rest awhile. Come both of you to the dining-room, if you will honor me so much, and let us have some refreshment."

Both the doctor and Albrecht were somewhat stiff from their long-continued constrained position, and a little tired withal. They were glad to accept the painter's invitation, and went with him to the room, where the servant, by Rembrandt's direction, had already prepared a good meal, for it was now past the middle of the day.

"My dear Rembrandt," said Dr. Tulp, "may I crave the honor of this young man's acquaintance. You have not yet made known to me his name; yet, if I mistake not, he is your friend."

"Alas! alas! what will I do next?" said Rembrandt. "I have no wits at all when I get to painting. I crave pardon of you both. Dr. Tulp this is my friend, Albrecht von Stoltzing; I met him on the road hither as I came from Leyden, and we have been together ever since. He is from Nuremberg, and he has a fine collection of prints which he wishes to sell here."

"I am most pleased to meet you, Herr von Stoltzing," said Dr. Tulp with his habitual dignity.

"It is a great honor and pleasure to me, sir, to meet one whose fame is well known in my native land," said the courtly Albrecht.

Being now at ease, they soon did full justice to the ample provision of meat, bread, fruit, and Rhine wine, with which the table was loaded.

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Afterward the painting was resumed, and before the afternoon was over the portrait of Dr. Tulp was well advanced. The accuracy of the likeness was so marked already that both Dr. Tulp and Albrecht uttered exclamations of wonder as they looked on what the master had accomplished.

The other sittings were much like this one; but as each different doctor came to sit for his portrait there was always the same amazement, the same inability to comprehend the intense originality of the picture and the mastery of its grouping and handling. Yet all felt that here was something new in the art, and were well aware that such a picture could not fail to make a great stir in Amsterdam, where people loved pictures as the Greeks loved statues. The whole town would surely ring with it, and they themselves would never be forgotten, because of this masterly picture.

CHAPTER XIV

What Can Come From a Picture

AT last the "Anatomy Lesson" was finished, nor had it taken long to complete it when the size and importance of the composition were considered. The fiery painter had been carried away by his conception, and he worked at white heat, but always with a touch so sure that one would have thought the artist must have been as calm and steady as a theologian reading an abstruse commentary.

Dr. Tulp and his pupils came to see it in the studio. There was a chorus of admiration which touched Rembrandt's very soul. This strange man, so haughty, so engrossed in one thing, self-centred, had his side of tenderness. There was some love of his fellows in him, albeit he associated not much with his kind, and for the most part was a solitary. At this moment there came to him a thrill that brought tears to his eyes as the learned men went into rhapsodies over his creation.

"My friends and pupils," said Dr. Tulp, rising, "and if I may call him by that name, my friend Rembrandt, I feel that in the presence of this masterpiece it is incumbent upon me to say a very few words that may, if I am fortunate, convince the master who has done this that we are not without

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appreciation of his marvellous achievement. We thank him, we admire him, and we bow in reverence before that genius which has produced what is without a parallel in Dutch art, great and admirable as that art is. I will detain you yet a moment. It seems to me that it would be selfish if the Surgeons' Guild, to whom I give this picture, should take it at once to the Guild House. My friends, we owe a duty to our fellow-citizens. We have no right to keep entirely to ourselves a work so masterly. What think you? Would it not be well that this picture should be publicly shown in the town-hall for some weeks, that all those who dwell in Amsterdam may come to know that a great painter lives among them, greater than any who has been before him in this town. What say ye, my masters? Shall the picture be thus disposed?"

There was a loud voice of approbation, and the picture was fairly borne away in triumph among the doctors almost as Cimabue's Madonna was carried through the streets of Florence, and in the great town-hall it was placed.

In the resort of the citizens when there was a town meeting, in the place where the grave Burgomasters sat and deliberated about the city's affairs, in the very heart and centre of the life of Amsterdam, they hung Rembrandt's masterpiece, that all, both high and low, might learn to know it.

It was not long before all heard about the picture and flocked to see it. It was received with an outburst of almost universal admiration. There were some among the artists who held back a

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little. The conception was so novel, so entirely different from that of any other Guild picture, that the admission of its pre-eminent greatness was in a way a slur upon all pictures of the kind which had been painted before. These Dutch painters were very human, and, moreover, they were justly proud of their own art. It was not easy for them to confess the superiority of a rival in their own chosen field, especially so young a man, and this his first effort at such a work. Nevertheless, most of them were generous and frankly confessed their admiration. Some, however, were jealous and surly. Rembrandt's manner was never conciliatory, and he took little pains to placate those whose pride was ruffled. As a consequence he already had some enemies in Amsterdam, but on the whole the admiration of the picture was so great that it came true, as Hendrik had said would be the case, that the painter at once became the talk of the town, and the most popular portrait painter in Amsterdam. He was overwhelmed with commissions, and had not the time to paint half of the portraits that were ordered.

Rembrandt took his popularity as only his due. He was always fully aware of his powers—always proud and self-confident. Now, however, his manner was more than usually chastened, for he knew not whether Saskia had heard of the picture, and it was Saskia who was now filling his thoughts, even more than his art. The passion which swept him was as great as was possible to his nature, and moreover obstacles and delays had brought it to white heat. Each day he went to

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Hendrik's and inquired as to her return, but she had not yet come. Rembrandt could not well go to seek her and neglect all the work which was pouring in upon him.

The truth was that Saskia had gone, partly because of maidenly modesty, since she feared she had said too much to Albrecht, partly from pride, because she did not wish to seem too easily placated after so serious an offence, and partly because her sister Antje really did need her, for she was delicate and set much store by the company of her merry sister. These were good reasons enough surely, but nevertheless they were not sufficient to put Saskia entirely at her ease, nor did Antje find her quite so gay a companion as she was wont to be. Indeed at times Saskia was quite pensive and absent-minded, and sometimes her face wore a troubled look.

Antje rallied her about this, and vowed she must be in love, or she would not act thus. Saskia would deny this hotly, and then put on a forced merriment, which was so plainly false that it brought a smile to Antje's face.

One day a letter came to Antje, and she knew from the round and labored writing that it was from Hendrik. She loved her cousin, and eagerly broke the seal to read what he might say, for he wrote so rarely that a letter from him was quite an event. She deciphered the letter with some difficulty, but when she had mastered the intricacies of its handwriting her face lit up with quickly growing interest.

"What is it, sister?" said Saskia, who had been

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watching her. "You seem much interested. Will you not tell me? I know it's from Hendrik. Often have I laughed over his scrawls."

"Yes, yes, it is from Hendrik," said Antje. "Wait a moment till I read it all—then I will tell you."

Antje was lying, propped up with pillows, in one of those great carved beds of which the Dutch were so fond. Part of it was built into the wall, but the foot came out into the room, and the foot-board, posts, and canopy above were very richly ornamented. The low-latticed window threw a cross light that came under the canopy, otherwise Saskia, who was in a low but large chair, on a great cushion covered with tapestry, could not have seen her sister's face at all. After awhile the invalid finished the letter and then she immediately began to tell of its contents. "Oh! Saskia! a great man has arisen in Amsterdam—a painter. He is the talk of the town. Why, his picture was carried in triumph through the streets! Let me see! What is this? Oh! Hendrik, I wish you would write a little more plainly. Ah! I see 'exhibited' that was it! In the Town Hall, and everybody has seen it, and everybody says it is the greatest picture Dutch art has produced, and he has more commissions than he can fulfil, and what is this? What can this be? You stupid Hendrik, 'but he is tired,' nonsense, he can't be tired. What is it? Oh! it is 'tired,' yes that is it, 'and seems sad in spite of his triumph.'"

"Well! Antje," said Saskia, "that is very

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interesting, indeed. I suppose Franz Hals has come back and made another Guild picture. Perhaps you don't know you forgot to tell me the painter's name."

"I did, indeed, forget to tell you that I couldn't read it. Hendrik's writing is really too bad. You might try yourself. Here is the letter." Saskia took it. Instantly she read, "Rembrandt." She spoke no word, but a great thrill of joy made her quiver from head to foot. She turned toward the window, her hands clasped behind her, one holding the letter, and she looked out toward the sunset.

Antje looked upon her in amazement, as well she might, for it seemed that Saskia had forgotten everything but her thoughts.

"What has come to thee, sister?" said Antje, at length. "Methinks it must be something most strange that has moved thee thus. Ah! I know! Did I not tell thee thou wert in love? and now I shrewdly guess the name. I could not read it, but I know it is the name of him thou lovest. Tell it me, sister, tell it quickly."

"Antje you are in the right. There is no need of further concealment between us," said Saskia, coming from the window to the bed, and giving the letter again to her sister. "The name, dear, is Rembrandt. There have been few words of love between us, but, alas! enough for poor me. He treated me badly and I fled from Amsterdam; but I do not really think he meant it. He forgot me once, indeed, he did; then he had said he would paint my picture, but now he has nobly

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sought to win honor and fame. Oh! I see, sister, I see! How grand he is! He yielded not to discouragement when he failed to find me. He has painted his picture for me. I know it, oh! I know it. He shall have his reward—but not too quickly. Oh! I will play with him! I will have many a merry jest before I yield, but I won't go away again. The next time he comes, Rembrandt will find me at home. Sister, when goes the next boat to Amsterdam? I must return directly. I have stayed too long as it is."

"Upon my word, Saskia, I thought thou would'st never stop talking. Rembrandt, you say is the great painter and the man who is blessed with my sweet sister's love. He is, indeed, one of the most fortunate of mortals. Whence came he, Saskia? I never heard of him."

"Fie on you, Antje! never heard of the greatest master in Holland? Well, you'd better hear of him. He came from Leyden. He has not dwelt long in Amsterdam, though he has been there before. But when leaves the boat? I must go back, I say."

Antje, with loving interest, did what she could to hasten her sister's departure, and while the preparations were going forward Saskia told her all the story, which certainly would have interested anyone and did greatly excite the romantic Antje.

So Saskia went back to Amsterdam, and for a time she lodged with her Cousin Hendrik.

One day Albrecht, who always brought to Rembrandt the news from Hendrik's, came back to the studio in a state of very evident excite

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ment. Rembrandt was painting an important portrait, and it was hardly possible to interrupt him at that moment. An Amsterdam dame of much majesty and gravity of demeanor was the subject. She seemed one who brooked no interruption in her business, though she might possibly interfere in the business of others in a rather severe way. She was an admiral's wife, and though Albrecht knew it not, the admiral, brave as a lion at sea, was tame as a lamb at home.

So Albrecht, with his accustomed shrewdness, made the best of it. "Oh! well," he thought, "he can wait; a little waiting more or less matters not. Sometimes it is well for a man, especially a hot-headed man like yonder Rembrandt. Better he should wait than have the vials of that sweet lady's wrath poured on his head." This Albrecht dreamed to some purpose. Sometimes he dreamed out characters better than others could find them out by the most rigorous analysis, and he felt directly the lady's asperity. Therefore he waited. After a long while the lady arose with much dignity and said. "The sitting has been long enough, Mynheer Rembrandt. Not that I am weary, I am never weary, but there are duties to be done at home."

Rembrandt bowed gravely, and said: "When will it please you, My Frow, to come again, that I may finish the portrait? It nears completion."

"I will come to-morrow, sir, in the morning. Marie, fetch my cloak and my gloves."

Presently the lady bowed with much stateliness and departed with her maid.

CHAPTER XV

Saskia and Rembrandt

A FEW minutes after the departure of Rembrandt's sitter Albrecht came quietly toward the painter and said: "She has come back. She is here. She is at Hendrik's."

"Mean you Saskia has come back, Albrecht? or are you raving about that unknown lady whom you have not yet found?"

"Nay, Rembrandt, indeed, I spoke of Saskia. It is true that she is here. I saw her not, but Hendrik said she was there, and that her coming was sudden and unlooked for—nor did she explain why she had returned so soon."

"What hour of the day is it, Albrecht? I know not how long I have been painting."

"It is but three of the afternoon, and the days are longer now, as the spring draws on."

"I will to Hendrik's at once. There will be yet time to see her."

Rembrandt threw down his palette and brushes, leaving them for the boy to cleanse. He did, however, stop to give a little heed to his toilet, a thing most unwonted for him. Then, in a very few minutes, he donned his broad hat and wrapped his long cloak around him and strode eagerly toward Hendrik's shop.

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He thought not of what he should say to the maiden, save that he would by some means make her know his love. His very life depended on her return of his affection, and he thought but little of the quarrel which had separated them. The full flood-tide of love was not to be checked by such trifles. The love had been there all the time, and Saskia must know it now, once and forever.

He came to Hendrik's door and entered hastily, but such entrance was so common with him that it attracted little attention even from Hendrik, who was there as usual, sitting behind his big desk at the farther end of the shop. Rembrandt went directly toward him and said: "Hendrik, I am told Saskia is here. Is it true?"

"Ah! ah! that is you, friend? I am proud to have so famous a man honor my humble shop with his presence. Yes, yes! plain Hendrik knows genius when he sees it, and sometimes he can see it. He saw it in you. Oh, yes! long ago. He told you so. The very idea that Hendrik should have been first to know there was a genius here in Amsterdam! Oh, well! They all know it now! I greet you gladly, friend, I am proud."

"Peace, man," said Rembrandt. "I thank you for your compliments, I doubt not they are well meant. I thank you, I say; but heard you not my question? Is Saskia here?"

"Saskia? Saskia? Oh! so the wind blows! Yes, my master, she is here. What would you with her?"

"I would see her, and that at once. I have

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something to say to her that brooks not delay. Send your varlet. Ask if she is within, and do it quickly, man. There is no time to be lost."

"Well, well. Ah me! I never did see a Dutchman in such a hurry. Caspar. What ho there! Caspar!"

"Yes, master," said the little servant, who was a sort of man-of-all-work in Hendrik's home.

"Hie to Mistress Saskia's room above, and tell her that the famous painter, Rembrandt, is below and fain would have speech with her."

"I go master," and he went. He gave his message. Saskia had expected this, for she remembered Rembrandt's eyes. She knew it was only a question of a short time when he would come, and since she had come back to Amsterdam, as she well knew, for the very purpose of seeing him again, it would have been foolish, and perhaps dangerous, for her and for him, to refuse him entrance.

Saskia flushed a little, then she said, with perfect calmness: "Caspar, you may bid Mynheer Rembrandt welcome here."

A moment later Rembrandt entered the room. He stood for an instant in silence devouring Saskia with his eyes, then said:

"Welcome home! fairest of all fair ladies! Amsterdam has been but a dreary place without you."

"I thank you, sir, for your courtly words," said Saskia, laughing lightly. "Indeed, I thought not you would remember me at all. I have been told that your memory is very treacherous."

"Nay! jest not with me, dear lady, nor chide

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me. Well know I what you mean, but I have repented in dust and ashes, and I have suffered tortures because of my fault. I offer no excuse, save that I was carried away by the excitement of the most important work of my life. Can you not forgive? Surely you know something about the engrossing power of art, and surely you could think how much the painting of such a picture meant to me?"

"Why! what are you making such a trouble about, Mynheer painter? Do you think we Friesland girls would confess ourselves offended, or hurt by you men even if it were true? But if you want forgiveness, and think you need it, as I verily believe myself you do, why, take it, and welcome.

"And now, sir," said Saskia, rising, and making a low and stately obeisance, "it seems that homage must be paid to the great man, the famous painter of Amsterdam. Even in Franeker, sir, your name was on all lips. In truth, one reason for my return was that I might see the masterpiece of which all men speak, and enlist myself in the vast company of your admirers."

"Oh! Saskia! Saskia! sweet Saskia! I thank you for your forgiveness, which I deserved not—but I pray you jest not with me, even if you flatter in the jesting. I cannot bear that you should trifle with me."

"Trifle, Sir! Pray what mean you? I did but pay you a pretty compliment, and you look as sober as if I had given you a dose of vinegar. Pray what would you have me say?"

REMBRANDT

“Fairest lady! What you said was sweet to hear. Any words from those lips are sweet, even if they chide. Surely, surely thou knowest, Saskia, what words I would hear from thee?”

“Nay—but I know not at all,” said Saskia. “Surely I forgave you, and spoke you fair—too fair in sooth, for really you deserved no word at all from me.”

“I know that. I am indeed quite unworthy that you speak to me, but in love there is no question of desert, it is life or death, and, Saskia, I love you. My life is in your hands. It is yours—all yours! Oh! beloved! will you take it? and bless it, or will you cast it from you and ruin it?”

Saskia blushed deeply, and averted her face. He approached her, and kneeling took her hand, which he ardently pressed to his lips. The little hand trembled, but it was not withdrawn. Not a word was spoken for a moment. Then Saskia turned and looked very tenderly full into Rembrandt's glorious eyes.

“My master!” she said, softly.

In an instant his arms were about her and he had kissed her lips. Then her head sank on his shoulder.

“Ah! Thou art indeed mine, thou little teasing fairy. Wouldst thou chide me with thy jests, and all thy playful ways? Nay, my Saskia has a deep true heart, and now I know it beats for me, as mine for her forever. Oh! The rapture of this hour! I knew not life held such bliss! My God, what have I done that the treasure of this love should come to me?”

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"Nay, dearest Rembrandt, speak not thus. Thou art to me the greatest of men. Hadst thou not spoken to me my heart would have broken. There—I have told thee! and I believe I am no true Dutch maiden. I am too lightly won."

"What meanest thou by such words, thou pearl of women? So easily won, indeed! Thou naughty one! hast thou not been tearing my heart in pieces all these months? Didst thou not run away and give me no chance to see thee? Ah! cruel! well thou knewest, even then, that I loved thee, and yet how thou didst torture me."

Saskia withdrew herself from her lover's embrace, and the old mischief danced again in the eyes but now suffused with tears of tenderness.

"Ah! ah! sayest thou so! Now, fair sir, wilt thou kindly tell me what reason thou gavest me to suppose that thou didst care for me? Is it a proof of love to forget all about painting a portrait of the lady? Now fie upon you."

"Nay, sweet one, but thou didst know. I am sure my eyes told thee. I did not dare to speak at once, but thou canst not say thou didst not know. I would have spoken in the studio but thou gavest me no chance, and fled with Hendrik's wife the moment thou sawest what was in my heart. But what matters it, beloved? Thou knowest now that Rembrandt's love is all thine. May God bless the sweet lips that have told me thou wouldst take it, and give thine in return."

"I have a word to say to thee, my lord," said Saskia. "Let it not be known that there is any

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word of love between us as yet, for I have many things to do, and thou must wait for me a long time yet."

"Be it as thou wilt, my own. I will wait as long as it seemeth best to thee. Who could not wait happily with the prospect of such a treasure gladdening his heart? But I may speak to Hendrik, and to Albrecht, under pledge of secrecy?"

"Yes, thou mayest do that. In truth I believe it would be hard to deceive either of them as to this matter."

"And now, my own beloved, thou wilt grant me a kiss before I part from thee?"

It was the kiss of their betrothal—the kiss that comes but once, for it is the first-fruit of intense passion. Then, with heart beating quick, with flushed cheeks, fiery eyes, and the air of a conqueror, Rembrandt left the lady of his love. Saskia, no less moved, could scarce calm the tempest in her breast, nor did she care to calm it. She was a true woman, and she gloried in giving herself to the man she loved and who loved her. She retired to her chamber and gave herself completely to dreaming of this hero, this masterful man with great, black eyes—this great and glorious painter—this man among men endowed with every virtue, who had given all the wealth of his love to poor little Saskia, who was nothing but a merry Friesland maiden. Her bosom rose and fell tumultuously as she thought of her hero, nor could she by any means still the wild beating of her heart. Why should he have loved her. How could one so great—so famous

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—give such a treasure to her. “But no! I will not think thus of myself,” thought Saskia. “He loves me — and that is enough to dignify any woman. I will seek to be more sober and serious, that I may help him besides giving him all my love.”

Rembrandt descended the stair, nearly turning back at every step. As he came to the bottom he went half way up again, so longed he to see Saskia once more, but at last he tore himself away, and came into Hendrik’s shop. It was now quite dark. The outer shutters were closed, and the lamps were lighted. Hendrik was dozing in his chair. The labors of the day were over and good Hendrik dearly loved a nap when no business was pressing upon him. He woke up, however, when Rembrandt entered, and rubbed his eyes. He yawned two or three times, then looked at Rembrandt and opened his mouth wide from astonishment.

“Why! what’s come over you, man? What have you been doing? Has Saskia flagons of Rhenish? You must have been feasting, man!”

“Hush, Hendrik, be quiet, I pray you! I have something to say to you.”

“Oho! Oho! you needn’t say it. I see it all now. Oh! Hendrik isn’t quite so stupid as he seems. I knew it would be so! She wasn’t so angry then, after all! Ha! ha! I knew why she came back. Well, I’m glad of it. I’m proud of it! Why, I’m to be cousin to the greatest painter of the day, and I love him, too. Give us your hand, man. I’m glad of it, I say. Come in here

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and drain a goblet of my best. I will not take no for an answer. Come, I say," and the jovial Hendrik fairly dragged Rembrandt into the dining-room. He produced the very best wine he had. "Stand, sir, and clink your glass with mine. Here's to Rembrandt and Saskia, the finest pair in all Amsterdam."

It was some time before Rembrandt could say a word, so overjoyed and so voluble was Hendrik. At last, however, he managed to tell him that the engagement was not to be spoken of at present, because the marriage, so Saskia had said, could not take place for some time.

"As you will, my friend, ha! ha! my cousin I mean. Hendrik is mum, oh! yes, quite mum. Hendrik's wife will know. Saskia will tell her. That can't be helped."

"Oh, yes! I suppose so, but, mind you, Hendrik, it goes no farther, for Saskia has so said. And now I must go, for it is getting late."

"Not without another bumper, my friend, you dare not refuse me in pledging again your health and hers, and all happiness to you both. In good sooth, ye both deserve it. So think I, and so I trow it will be. Drain your glass, man."

Rembrandt could not refuse at such a time, and the toast was drunk. Directly afterward the painter took his way back to the studio. It was a wonder that he did not get lost. The world without was almost unseen. He was living in a deeper world within. This was Rembrandt's first passion for a woman. His devotion to his work had excluded even the light fancies which at times pos-

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sess the hearts of all young men. Dreams and thoughts, all new and strange, chased each other through his eager brain; emotions—tender, soft, delicious, never dreamed of before, swept over his heart like slowly heaving waves rising and falling beneath the touch of some fair breeze from unknown lands where fairies dwelt. He knew not what had come over him, nor did he care to know. He yielded himself utterly to this blind delight of loving and being loved. Art and all else were for the time quite forgotten, and he simply lived in Saskia. Such was his temperament. There seemed never to be anything that could interfere with his central thought. All the intensity of his nature seemed to concentrate itself on one thing at a time.

He reached the studio at last, though it is a wonder he ever did find it. It was more instinct, than any conscious choosing of his way, among the narrow streets and along the winding canals.

By this time it was late—long past the usual hour for supper, and Albrecht was getting very impatient. In justice to this loyal friend, be it said that he was thinking not alone about his delayed supper, but also about what might have happened to Rembrandt. He was almost as much interested in his friend's love-affair as his own. He was overjoyed when the door opened and Rembrandt entered, for he saw at the first glance that all was well.

Rising quickly from his chair by the big fireplace, Albrecht strode across the room with hand outstretched and grasped Rembrandt's hand.

REMBRANDT

“ You need not say a word, my dear, dear friend ! Why, it is written all over your face ! I believe everyone in the streets must have read the news as you passed on. Quite unnecessary to give any further public notice of this happy event. From my heart I wish you joy, and I wish her joy, for indeed, I believe her the most fortunate of women to have won the love of my friend, my hero, my greatest of painters, my most famous of Dutchmen ! ”

“ Hush, Albrecht. How dare you speak thus of Saskia ? Know now and always that I am not worthy to touch the hem of her garment. But forgive me ! Indeed, I know you spoke from the depth of your heart’s affection, and I should have thanked you rather than chided you ; but Saskia is an angel of goodness, and a goddess of beauty and love. The treasure of her tenderness is priceless, and there is no man worthy to possess it. Nevertheless, it is true, Albrecht, that she has given me, unworthy though I am, that treasure. I am humbled at the thought of it, although I am nearly mad with joy as you have seen.”

“ Well, well, dear Rembrandt, I rejoice with you from the very bottom of my heart. And now are you so well fed with the sweets of love that bodily cravings of hunger assail you not ? ”

“ Oh ! it is supper-time, I suppose, I had not thought of that. Why did you not make them serve you, Albrecht ? There was no need to wait for me. In sooth I care for nothing, I believe. There are better things in this world than eating and drinking. Nevertheless these are painful ne-

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cessities. Here, Jan, make ready at once for Herr Albrecht and myself. Why did you not serve him before, you idiot?"

"Because, master, he did not ask me to; no he didn't; and I didn't know he wanted it, no I didn't, and how should I know when he said naught and not a word said he? But it's all ready, master. So it is."

"Go, then, stupid, and fetch some of that red wine from France, and put the big carved tankards on the table, Herr Albrecht wants to drink my health."

All was soon prepared. In spite of his contemptuous remarks about the good things of the table, Rembrandt both ate and drank, though very sparingly. He told Albrecht what had happened, and how he believed that the pride Saskia had felt in the success of the "Anatomy Lesson" had brought her back to Amsterdam, and made her willing to see him and forgive him.

"Ah, Albrecht, it was a lucky day when you and I got into the dissecting-room, and saw the doctor and his pupils at their work."

CHAPTER XVI

Lazarus

IN a house in the Jew quarter on the Breedestraat, not far from the five-towered gate of St. Anthony, lived a Jew named Lazarus. At this time he was a man about thirty, and had acquired considerable money in various kinds of business, more or less reputable, but not nearly enough to content him. He had a friend, and in a way a partner, whose name was Isaac.

“These men were sitting together one day shortly after the exhibition of Rembrandt’s “Anatomy Lesson” in the Town Hall. Both of them had seen the picture, and, like every one else in Amsterdam, they knew of the painter’s already achieved fame. Lazarus was a very shrewd man, and Isaac was not far behind him in shrewdness. Lazarus thought there might be a chance to make some money out of this young painter. It was clear that he must be getting much money, for his studio was thronged with sitters. The question was, how to make him spend it, and in such a way that a goodly share of it would flow into the Jew’s coffers.

Lazarus had made some little study of Rembrandt, and had found out that he was quite careless about money, and was most easily tempted to

LAZARUS

spend it on prints or pictures. There might he profit in tempting him still further in this direction.

"Now, Isaac," said Lazarus, "what do you think of this Rembrandt, that fellow that painted that great picture in the Hall, that one we saw the other day?"

"Well. Lazarus, I know not how good it is, but I have been told he was a very grand painter, and I think that is about all I know."

"I am ashamed of you, Isaac! Why, that is a great man, and such men like those—they are the men to make rich the children of Israel! When a man is great like that in one way, see you, he will sure be weak in some other way. God be thanked! I know already where he is weak. Isaac! I will buy some great pictures! and I will buy them cheap. Yes, that can I do. I know well where I can find a Rubens that is grand, and the man that owns that painting—he is in debt, and I can buy that picture dirt cheap. Was your eye open now, Isaac?"

"Ah! my friend," said Isaac. "The children of Israel will not be poor while the God of Abraham spares to them a spirit like that of Lazarus. My friend! that idea is grand! Wish you that I help you?"

"Why not, Isaac? Gold must I have. There is not enough in mine own chest. That Rubens comes not for nothing. No matter if the man that had it was ruined. I will get it cheap, but I must give at least the half of its worth. Go fetch me one thousand florins."

REMBRANDT

"Ah, my God! Lazarus! Where could I get that gold? I am poor. I am at great expenses at my business."

"That's very well, Isaac! I know all about that, and I know also that there is more than ten thousand florins in your chest now."

"God of Abraham," said Isaac, trembling. "How know you that?"

"Now, my friend, it is not good to try to lie to me. I know what I speak about. Go get the gold and I will give you one-quarter of the profits that I will make from the painter Rembrandt, and you will be thankful. Go quickly."

And Isaac went. It was ill arguing with Lazarus. He was thoroughly well-informed, naturally extremely shrewd, and, moreover, almost uniformly successful in his ventures. Isaac was perfectly well aware that he could make money out of anything from which Lazarus could get gain, and while he would have liked a larger share, nevertheless, half a loaf is better than no bread. Grumbling and muttering to himself he went to his own house, which was a little farther down the Breedestraat, and went up the narrow stairs, as quietly as he could to the attic, in the darkest corner of which he kept his great coffer. It was true that there were ten thousand florins in it. It was also true that there was a great deal more, besides—precious stones in plenty. There were several padlocks on the great iron coffer. Isaac took the keys from a little bag which he always carried attached to his girdle under his gaberdine. He glanced around in

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every direction to see, if perchance anyone had followed him—but no! all was quiet. He and his coffer were alone in the dark attic. With trembling fingers, he unlocked paldock after padlock, and opened the coffer. From the store of shining gold pieces he took the thousand florins that Lazarus had demanded, then relocked all carefully, put the keys back in the little bag, put the gold in another little bag, which he had brought for the purpose, then crept quietly across the attic to the door, locked that, and stole down the stairs. No one had heard him. He felt sure of that. There was no one in the house, except the old waiting-woman and the cook, and they were fast asleep in the kitchen.

Isaac went back to Lazarus's house. As he went he muttered, "I wonder how that man knew I had that gold! Does he watch me, I wonder? And has he found out where is my coffer? I like it not at all."

"Well, my friend," said Lazarus, as Isaac came in. "You have brought the gold. I see that is a good fat bag that swells out under your cloak."

"Ah! my God! my God! Was that so easy to see? Why, I might have been robbed in the streets."

"Well, you weren't robbed, friend Isaac, and in Heaven's name what is the use of shaking and trembling that way about what never happened. Stop your shaking, or by the Lord I'll give you something to make you shake—and count me out that gold here just so quick as you can."

Isaac did not stop trembling. On the contrary

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he trembled all the more, and his hand shook so, that the counting was a difficult matter. However, it was accomplished at last with Lazarus's good help. Then Lazarus drew up an agreement, acknowledging the receipt of this money from Isaac, and specifying that Isaac was to receive one-fourth of the profits of the enterprise in which it was to be used. The enterprise itself was not described in the paper, nor could it be inferred from anything in it, because it simply said that Lazarus was to use the money as had been agreed upon between the parties. It was a safe, discreet, and binding document as between the two. The courts might take another view of it. Both parties signed it, and the campaign of the Jews against Rembrandt was fairly opened.

"That was all right," said Lazarus. "I will lose no time. I go my way direct to that man who has the Rubens. I hope I am not too late. When I get that picture I will bring it here, and will go to the studio of this fine painter and I shall tell him all about it."

Lazarus departed forthwith on his errand. He was not too late. The Rubens, which was really a very fine example, was not yet sold, and in truth the bankrupt merchant who owned it was in great trouble because he had not found a purchaser. When his trouble and need and Lazarus's shrewdness and craft are put together, it is not hard to understand how the Jew got the picture for less than a quarter of its value. He did not need to use Isaac's thousand florins at all, for he had brought enough of his own to pay for the picture

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at the ridiculous price to which he had forced the poor merchant.

Lazarus took the picture and went back to his house in the Breedestraat. As he went he said, "Well, now I am glad that Isaac was not with me there. I can make that picture's price what I please, I think. He was a fool, that Isaac. He might as well have given me his money, he made it so plain he had it. I hope that painter, Rembrandt, is just so big a fool. If that is so, my God! my fortune is made, for that painter he will roll in moneys for a good while yet."

Lazarus's heart was full of joy as he entered his house, and placed the Rubens in the front room near the window. It was not a large example, but it was a very choice one, and would surely tempt Rembrandt because of its quality, and the comparatively small sum of money for which it could be bought. Lazarus lost no time, but set off directly for Rembrandt's studio. Interest was running against him, and he hastened. The artist was within, but he was very busy. He had a sitter and could not be interrupted. Ah! well! Lazarus would wait, though he did not enjoy that in the least. It was a long waiting—but at length the studio-door opened, and a noble looking young man came out followed by the painter himself.

"Most noble Van Dort," said Rembrandt, "if you will give me one more sitting, to-morrow, I think I can finish the picture."

"As you will, Mynheer Rembrandt," said the famous admiral. "I will come in the morning."

REMBRANDT

"It is well. Farewell, my lord. I will be at your service on the morrow."

The admiral wrapped his cloak around him, and strode out, hardly seeing the Jew who was sitting in the corridor in the same high-backed chair in which Saskia once had sat. Rembrandt followed the great man to the door, opened it for him, and bowed low as he took his departure. In those days there were few, indeed, more highly esteemed in Amsterdam than the admirals, whose genius and indomitable courage had done so much to promote the greatness of the Low Countries. After closing the door Rembrandt turned to the Jew, who had risen from the chair and was bowing low, too low, as Rembrandt thought.

"I think, sir, I have not the pleasure of your acquaintance. Do you desire aught with me?"

"I would not disturb you, sir, for well I know your time is precious."

"You do not disturb me. Can you not see, I have just finished a sitting? But what is your name, and why are you here?"

"My name is Lazarus. I live in the Breestraat, and have heard of the great Rembrandt, and have seen that grand picture, the "Lesson in Anatomy." My God! what a work is that? That makes all Holland great. I was told that the painter loved beautiful pictures and prints, and I came to tell him about a most wonderful little picture by Rubens that I found myself, and I can sell it cheap, for I got it by an accident, I will tell you all about that. But if I might ask so much, would you come and see that picture?"



THE ACCOUNTANT
(LAZARUS)

LAZARUS

“A fine example of Rubens, you say? Of course, I will go to see it, but as to buying it—that would be far beyond my means, if it is really what you claim.”

“Oh, as to that, master, we can speak later. If that picture pleases you, you will find that Lazarus, although he is a Jew, will be most liberal, and will make just such arrangements as you like about the payments. But you will honor me to go to my house and see that great Rubens?”

“Yes! yes! I will go with you directly. It so happens that I have not another sitter for an hour.”

So the Jew and the painter went together to the Breedestraat. Rembrandt saw the Rubens and was captivated by it, as well he might be, for it was a most splendid piece of color and drawing. The Jew did not wish to press his victim too hard at first, since he had strong hopes of future gain, and was willing to wait. He, therefore, asked only four times what he had paid for the picture, and really it was cheap at that.

“But I have not so much money. What do you think of me? I am a struggling painter, just beginning,” said Rembrandt.

“Oh, that matters not about the money. You take the picture. You give me your writing for the amount. What for do you think of the money? You will have more than you can spend in a little while. What! This famous Rembrandt care about a few thousand florins! Why, he will be the richest man in Amsterdam in a little time.”

Rembrandt yielded, nor was it the first time.

REMBRANDT

Already he had bought many of Albrecht's prints —already rich furniture, beautiful vases and glasses, fine tapestries and specimens of armor were filling his studio. In excuse for him, it may be said that he was soon to marry and would need these things, but he never stopped to count the cost.

CHAPTER XVII

Hildegarde von Lebenthal to Undine von Klarbrunnen

A LETTER

MY own dearest, how can I tell you all that has happened? Now, how much do you know, I wonder, and how can I tell how much you know? But, well, I know how much you want to know—everything, of course! What would woman's curiosity be worth if it stopped short of knowing it all? That same curiosity is a great power in the world. It keeps us women wide awake. We could not do without it. As it is, there is a keenness about us which a clumsy man can never evade. But, dear me, I am philosophizing. You never thought of your Hildegarde as a philosopher, philosopheress, I meant to say, now, did you? Ah! but this is tantalizing, I am sure. Perhaps I meant it to be. Who knows? Maybe I could whet your appetite, but I tell you now, I will give you enough to satisfy it, keen whetted though it be. Perhaps I might as well begin, since I have promised so much, for if you do not begin, how are you going to end? and the one is as trying as the other for women, you know. Perhaps the beginning is harder, because it is try-

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ing to give to others what is known only to one's self, and yet, ending is hard, too, for there is always so much to say. I wonder how many last words there will be to this letter. Enough of this—I must begin—hard as it is. Know then, that I escaped from my father's castle without any trouble. He thought not that I would dare do such a thing, but he little knew how hateful Count Swanenburg was to me. I refused to marry him, but my father was forcing me into his arms. He would have kept me a prisoner until I consented, if I had not escaped as I did. Oh! he had his reasons; I knew them well. It's just the old story, added wealth and power from the marriage—and what counts the daughter's happiness? Oh! it's too old to tell about. You have heard it a thousand times, and so had I. Seeing what was coming I bribed old Marjorie and Wilhelm, the groom, and one dark night we all galloped away from the castle. You know every road about Nuremberg is familiar to me, and I had no trouble, even in the night, in coming to a good hostelry where I had been with my father. I had to use money here also lest they should send word back to the castle about my being there. Now, my purpose was to get to Amsterdam. Why? I hear you asking. Do you not remember my Cousin Hildebrand? I am sure you do. He was infatuated with art, and long ago he went to Holland, and as I thought to Amsterdam—that he might study in the great art centre. If I could get quietly to the big Dutch town, and find him we might manage to live in some quiet way.

HILDEGARDE TO UNDINE

Be patient, for I must describe my adventures. They weren't so very terrible after all. Good fortune was with us and we met none of those roving bands of free-booters that infest the land during these fearful wars that seem as if they would never end. Why in the world do men wish to be forever cutting each other's throats? We travelled mostly by night, and sometimes I was in fear lest we should lose our way, but I feared not very much, for we were on the high road leading to Holland, which had been much used by the soldiers on both sides, and it was easy to follow it even at night. The moon shone upon us and there was another piece of good fortune. I feared we might be stopped at the boundary, but Wilhelm rode ahead and he found that the Dutch guards had been carousing, and were sound asleep. We muffled the horses' hoofs, and passed the guards all unperceived.

Oh, dearest friend—sister, let me call you! for you are the only sister I have, you will never know the excitement of those midnight rides. I cannot possibly tell you, for it looks like a dream. But they let us in at last, through the big gate of St. Anthony with its five towers—not until after they had searched us quite too closely to be agreeable, and made me tell the reason of my coming, which I did not wish to tell. The officer of the guard seemed a good-hearted man, and when he had heard my story, he was really friendly and even directed me to a place where I could find lodgings in a very quiet little street. I had money with me. You know my mother's money came

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to me and I had her jewels and my own. I was truly well provided for, nor shall I lack anything for a long time to come. Your Hildegarde may be romantic, but she does not wish to starve, and took good care that no such dire calamity could happen. Here in Amsterdam they know more about diamonds than anywhere else in the world. I took one of my rings to a dealer in gems here the other day, and the price he put on it really surprised me, both because of the large sum he was ready to give and the honesty of the Dutchman in so frankly confessing the value of the stone. I did not sell it because I did not need money then—but it is a pleasant feeling to know you can get it when you want it. But why am I talking about things so prosaic as money, when I am fairly on fire with the spirit of adventure. Rather odd—a lone damsel going about Amsterdam streets, and along the canals in search of a young man! It is most interesting! That odious count can never find me here, nor would my father dream that I could play so mad a prank. I confess though, to you, dearest, that I am becoming just a wee bit timorous. You see the first excitement of my flight and escape has subsided a little, and I have not yet found Hildebrand, and I am all alone except for Marjorie and Wilhelm. I can't take them about the streets with me—they look so queer and different from the people here. We would have a crowd about us in a minute. So I go alone, but I wear a hood and draw my cloak close about my face.

I have been several times in search of Hilde-

HILDEGARDE TO UNDINE

brand. I went to the art shop of one Hendrik, who is noted here as an art dealer; I made a pretence of buying prints, but I thought Hildebrand might be there because he is such a lover of art—and, therefore, I looked about me most keenly, and I asked a question or two very guardedly. The answers convinced me that my cousin was not there, but he might have been—and might come again. I dared not question too closely. I went again, and that time there was a young man in the shop whom I have seen before. I am sure of it, though I cannot, for the life of me, remember where. I am sure he is a German, and he is the noblest-looking man I ever saw. Now don't laugh because I said "noblest looking." That is what I mean. He had the face of a poet, and aren't poets always noble looking? Dear me! What am I saying? You will think I have fallen in love, and you'll never be more mistaken in your life than in thinking such a thought. I suppose I can admire the beauty of a face even if it is a man's without such suspicions, can't I? But I forgot you haven't accused me of anything yet, and I assure you there is no reason. Then I thought perhaps my cousin might be in the studio of the famous Rembrandt who has of late become the talk of this town, so I thought I would go there and wait around awhile toward evening when the students would be coming out, and perhaps thus I might chance upon Hildebrand. This I did, but in doing it I had an adventure indeed, one that wellnigh shrivelled up all my courage within me, and made me tremble from head to

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foot. I was standing at the corner—not far from the studio of Rembrandt, when suddenly a man came toward me from behind. I could hear his footsteps becoming more and more rapid as he neared me. I walked away as fast as I possibly could, but my heart was sinking and my knees trembling. I made poor work of the walking and the man rapidly gained on me. I did succeed in reaching the great place in front of the town-hall, and there I plucked up a little heart, for I knew the guild-house of the Civic Guard was at hand, and I could call assistance. So I turned and boldly faced my pursuer. I told him in very plain terms what I thought of him, and asked him if he was a fair specimen of the gentlefolk of Amsterdam. He went quickly away, fearful of the guard, but oh! Undine! I wish he had stayed longer! What a face he had! such eyes—great and dark and deep—brown curls falling on his shoulders! Now, I haven't fallen in love with two men at once, and I haven't fallen in love even with one. The German was the more beautiful, more poetic, but this other! ah! well! I hardly know what to say about him. There was a sense of power, some mysterious light of genius in his eyes. I never saw a face like that. I wonder, I wonder, could it be? I never thought of it till now—perhaps, perhaps it was the great Rembrandt himself! and yet, no, surely he would not be so unmannerly as thus to follow an unprotected maiden in the streets.

So you see, my own dearest, your wandering sister is having adventures with a vengeance. This

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man that followed me spoke of some German here who was trying to find where I lived—a friend of his—and he was helping his friend to search for me. Now, really, this is most interesting. If I don't find Hildebrand pretty soon I may have another protector, whether I like it or not, unless I am careful. I don't like this being tracked and hunted by strange men, and yet there is something rather inspiring about it after all. If a poor girl is pursued like that, why there must be something attractive about her. She can't but think that is true and it is a pleasant thought. Oh! we women all like to stroke our pretty plumage sometimes and gloat over the gleaming colors and graceful forms that we know make us lovely in the eyes of that curious—but, on the whole, attractive creature—man. We are very weak, but we confess it only to ourselves and dearest friends. Nevertheless, this particular bird is frightened and has not the slightest idea of being caught. She has just escaped a cage that might have imprisoned her for life, and she values her freedom too much to surrender it lightly. Now, if I don't find Hildebrand pretty soon I shall disguise myself in some way.

I'm not sure yet just what I shall do, but as soon as I know I will write you again, dearest sister. Meanwhile think of me as a lone damsel in a tower with knights strumming their guitars outside, and quite ready to lay lance in rest, if need be, for the unknown fair one. Oh! it is quite dangerous, I know, but it is thrillingly romantic, and I am not a bit afraid—not now I

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mean—perhaps I was frightened in the street when the stranger with the great eyes followed me. But that danger is passed. Sometimes I verily believe I wish it had not passed and sometimes I wish I knew more about the German. Indeed he had a rarely noble face and a most courtly bearing. All this is so interesting to me that I have written you a letter long enough to put you to sleep a dozen times. Forgive me, dearest, and write me soon and tell me how poor father and that odious count feel about my sudden departure. I am sorry for the father, though he was hard and cruel to me, but I am rejoiced beyond measure that I am beyond the reach of a man low enough to use such ignoble means to force a union with a woman who, as he well knows, hates and despises him. I send you all the love you can desire. Do take pity on your excited friend and send words of love and greeting as soon as you can find a safe way to send a letter hither.

Your most devoted friend,

HILDEGARDE VON LEBENLAND.

CHAPTER XVIII

The Painting of the Portraits

REMBRANDT'S life was now a very busy one. Portrait after portrait was painted, and then there were many pupils in the big room at the top of the warehouse, who needed a good deal of attention. He gave them a most vigorous training, and some, like Ferdinand Bol, and Govert Flinck, became great painters, and even caught something of the master's manner, though not much, for Rembrandt, like all great geniuses, stood alone, and was not fitted to be the founder of a school. But busy as he was, he found time to go on with Saskia's portrait. Those were among the happiest hours of his life, when the bright, beautiful maiden, who had given him her love, sat there in his studio, and he could feast his eyes upon her as he pleased, and then, with glowing color, and lines of faultless grace and truth, put upon the canvas the features and the form that he loved. Then, if ever, he blessed his art. It was beautiful love-making this immortalizing the beloved one. No sooner did he finish one portrait than he wished to begin another, and in truth he did paint Saskia several times in this period of their betrothal. Saskia grew more and more winsome. He knew not which charmed him most—her play-

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ful moods, which came most often, or a sweet seriousness that became her well, and lent a kind of dignity that transformed her from a merry maid into a deeply thinking, true-hearted woman. And then there was the charm of her beauty, her soft rosy cheeks, her sparkling eyes, her laughing, tantalizing mouth, her curls of amber hair, that rippled round her brow, and fell in careless profusion on her shoulders, the exquisite curves of her neck and breast, and all the lovely lines of her figure. Perhaps Rembrandt the artist almost forgot Rembrandt the lover, as he painted, again and again, the face and form which had captivated his eyes. Yet it was not the love of the eye alone, nor the delighted sense. To one so intensely in love with art as was Rembrandt, the beauty of the woman he loved counted for much. It may not have been the predominating force in the directing of his life, yet it exerted much power upon him. He valued it more than would be possible for anyone not an artist, and yet the mind of Saskia charmed him almost as much as her beauty. She was far more intellectual and thoughtful than was he. His life had been centralized on one thing from the time when he was a mere lad. In truth he was a very narrow and ignorant man save for his supreme knowledge of one subject. Saskia's mind had a much wider range, and her talk so delighted the painter that he cared to see no one else. His time was measured by the visits of his loved mistress to the studio, and his visits to her, for sometimes he went over to Hendrik's shop, in the evening, and the lovers passed delicious hours together,

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while Hendrik dozed on one side of the fire and his wife on the other. Then they talked of the future, and one evening Rembrandt said, "Saskia! dear, there is a house on the Breedestraat of which Lazarus the Jew has told me. I go to-morrow to see it, and if I find it what he says I mean to buy it. It is true, it is in the Jewish quarter, but, dear heart, that matters not. I find these Jews are very honest fellows, and they are most obliging. This Lazarus, especially, is most kind-hearted and always ready to help if money or aught else is needed."

"Oh, Rembrandt!" said Saskia, "buy not the house, I beg; much I fear me it will cost too dear."

"Have no fear, my own. There is no need to think of money. Even now the Prince Frederick has ordered pictures, nor do the other orders abate. Thou shalt have all that money can buy. And I will deck thee with pearls from the Orient and diamonds from the mines of Golconda! My brush will do all that."

"Oh! Rembrandt! I know not why I said what I did, but sure am I that there is a fear within me. There is a shadow in my dreams, and even in my waking thoughts. I know not whence it comes, beloved, but it does come. Oh! believe me! I care not for pearls and diamonds and fine houses! No, in all truth, I do not. I care for thee, my own. I beg of thee take no risk—believe me I am content if only I live with thee, it matters not where."

"Sweetest Saskia! tell me when will come the

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time when thou wilt live with me, and leave me no more?"

"Nay, my lord and master, I cannot tell thee that yet. I have but now heard that my sister, Antje, is very, very ill, and much I fear she may die." Saskia sobbed aloud, and Rembrandt comforted her as best he could with tender caresses.

His arms were about her now, her lovely form was enfolded in his embrace. "My own, my life, may I not go to Leyden and tell my father and my mother of our betrothal, and ask their consent to our marriage?"

"Oh! Rembrandt, how can you ask that of me, when Antje is so ill? Indeed my heart is overburdened, but yet, dear master of mine! be it as thou wilt. I am thine, now and forever, but thou must wait, beloved. I must go hence to Antje, and I am sad—but go, go to Leyden, and get the consent of which thou speakest."

At this moment Hendrik awoke, breaking thereby the continuity of a snore of portentous dimensions.

"Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Ah! Ah! by all the saints. Ugh! Ugh! how long have you been talking. Wife! wife! why, she's asleep. I don't see why people go to sleep at this time of night. Wake up, wife. It is early yet. Ugh! Ugh! I'm ashamed of you. Mynheer Rembrandt, I beg you to pardon my wife, she is somewhat overburdened with the work of the day. Sometimes she gets very weary. Ugh! Ugh! Ugh! Oh, what were you saying? I am sometimes a little deaf in my left ear."

"Indeed, Hendrik," said Rembrandt, "I said

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naught, oh! I beg you to believe, nothing at all of any account. But you know, Saskia and I are betrothed, and I was asking her whether I might not go to Leyden and ask consent to our marriage from my father and my mother. Saskia says I may go, but she tells me that her sister Antje is very ill, and she must go to Franeker for awhile. So I must wait longer, and this I can scarce abide, but needs must. I go then to Leyden and she to her sister. Now, I must bid you farewell for awhile."

"Well, well, Rembrandt, I am very sorry that you two must be separated for a time, but you know about the course of true love. Ha! ha! always a little rough in places, eh? Never mind man, your time will come. Just be patient if you can, but you never were very good at that. Well, Saskia, girl, don't be blushing there in the corner. Come here and bid your lover good-by like a true-hearted Dutch maiden as you are."

"Oh! Hendrik," said Saskia. "How can you say such things? You don't want to confuse a poor girl. Already have I said farewell to Mynheer Rembrandt, and once is enough."

"Oh! Ho! You said it, did you? Well, never mind, I will take you at your word. I'll say farewell, good friend, and I wish you a safe journey and a happy return."

"Farewell, Hendrik. Farewell, my Saskia. I trust to see you both again ere long."

Rembrandt donned his long cloak and broad hat, and with one last, tender glance at his lady, he left the print-seller's shop, and strode rapidly back to his studio. Although it was late when

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he came there, Albrecht was awaiting him and greeted him with that warm affection which had already become almost a passion with him.

"Where have you been so long, dear Rembrandt?" said Albrecht. "But, bless me, in the name of Venus and Cupid why do I ask? for I know you were with Saskia. The only wonder is you came back at all! And tell me, friend, how goes it? Is all well, and when will the marriage be?"

"Alas! Albrecht, we must wait awhile. Saskia's sister is very ill, and she goes to-morrow to Franeker that she may be with her, and I must hie me to Leyden to get consent to our marriage from the father and the mother."

"Yes, yes, Rembrandt. I have heard that such is your Dutch law. But you need not be down-hearted, man, even if you do have to wait awhile. Why, this will be a dear and sweet time for you when you are again with the parents you love so well and who will be thrilled with pride when you throw all your laurel-wreaths at their feet."

"Yes, Albrecht. You are right. The visit will be sweet, but! oh! you know not how weary is the waiting for Saskia!"

"I know not, say you. I wot I know far better than you what waiting means. You must have forgotten that I have not found the lady whom I seek. All day have I searched for her but without any success. She has not been near Hendrik's shop, nor has she been seen near here, so far as I can learn. I am at my wits' end—I know not where to look, but find her some way,

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I must and will. Talk about waiting—you! already blessed with love. You are a thankless fellow, and you don't seem to know how richly blessed you are."

"Oh! yes I do, Albrecht. I have no right to say one word of complaint, but—but you know I am impatient."

"Yes, I should say I did know that," said Albrecht, half aloud.

"Now, forgive me for my selfishness and forgetfulness about your troubles. Indeed I will do what I can to help you when I come back from Leyden. Between us we are sure to find her. Oh! I know it! Keep a brave heart, dear friend!"

CHAPTER XIX

Rembrandt goes to the Leyden Mill

REMBRANDT came again to the home in the Leyden mill that he might gain the consent of his parents to his marriage with Saskia. He was greeted with tenderest affection, and when the father and the mother had heard about the maiden whom he loved, they were glad to consent to his union to one so lovely and of so noble a family. The evening was spent in talk—Rembrandt telling of his success at Amsterdam, and of Saskia's charms—and the old people, in their turn, speaking of the success of the mill, and of the farms on the other side of the river, in which the mother took great pride. At last they parted, and Rembrandt went to the room in which he had slept in the days of his boyhood.

At dawn the silence of the night was broken, for with the first flush of day the sails of the mill were set to the morning breeze. The familiar sound of the noisy cogs and grinding stones awoke the painter instantly. A great wave of emotion swept over him. He was a boy again for the moment. Eagerly he went to the little window with its latticed panes. He opened it, and looked out as he had done often and often in the days of his youth.

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He lingered long at the window, until the broad light of day illumined the sky and the land, and the river was a broad belt of shimmering silver with each wavelet diamond crowned.

Rembrandt, after many a tender farewell, turned his back once more on the old mill, and wound his slow way back to Amsterdam by the canals and paths as before. He scarcely noticed now what was about him, so glad was his heart with tender thoughts—so flushed and excited was he by success already won—so eager for further successes that seemed sure to come.

All the long weary journey to Amsterdam seemed short. For once Rembrandt the artist became Rembrandt the man. His love absorbed him, and the love of the father and the mother touched and thrilled him. Not one sketch did he make on all the way. His heart was full to overflowing, and gladly he let the tides of emotion sweep over him. Yet he regretted sometimes that he did not seize and perpetuate some lovely meadow scene, some group of noble trees, some great cloud masses of pearly whiteness with the deep tender blue behind them, the overarching blue, the unfathomable spaces of the blue in which float the clouds of Holland, mounting one upon another, until they seem like those snow-clad mountains whose peaks are in the skies, but which are supported by the low hills and the higher hills, even by the valleys with their laughing streams—truly a meet union of the heavens and the earth, the uplifting purity and grandeur, the sustaining strength and tenderness. The thought of white

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cloud and white mountains here in this landscape of Holland was the same.

The impression of this beauty was very strong upon the painter. It was the inspiration of many and many an etching that came later, but for the time he was absorbed with his portraits, and indeed always, it was human life, rather than the scenes of nature that took first place in his mind. At last Rembrandt found himself again at his warehouse studio. He came there at the evening hour. Albrecht had not expected him so soon, but he was there at his post, keeping guard over the home of his friend.

"Rembrandt, Rembrandt," he exclaimed, as he opened the big door in answer to a knock so vigorous that he was sure it could have been given only by his impetuous friend. "Home again, so soon? That did I not expect, but glad indeed am I that you have come. The hours are weary without you."

"Albrecht, my true friend, with all heartiness I greet you ; and is all well here?"

"Oh! yes, so far as you are concerned, all is well—at least, I think so. It is true there has been a Jew here, Lazarus was his name, I think, yes, he was here before, I remember, and he wanted to see you, but he would not tell his errand."

"Lazarus, oh, yes, truly I think I know what he wants. I may have some dealings with him about a house in the Breedestraat. Now I bethink me, I had promised Lazarus to go with him to see that house on the very day I left for Leyden, and I forgot all about that. I remembered nothing but

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Saskia when I left her, and thought only of getting the needed consent for our marriage. Well, it is not the first time I have been known to forget an appointment. I dare say Lazarus will not suffer because of my negligence. He will be here to-morrow, I doubt not."

"Rembrandt, I pray you, tell me of your journey, and did you find the father and mother well, and what said they? Tell me all, I pray."

"Dear Albrecht, I found the same tenderness as of yore in the old home. My heart was touched and thrilled by the love of those dear parents. Not a moment did they hesitate about giving their consent to my marriage with Saskia. They would have given me all they possessed I think; and oh! Albrecht! you should have seen their pride in my success. Father had been doubtful about it, mother always trustful, but when they knew it was an accomplished fact, both were overcome by emotion. I was loath to leave them, but the portraits must be painted, and the money gained, that I may win a home for my Saskia."

"Yes, yes, Rembrandt, that is true, happy man that you are to have the bliss of a love already yours to nerve you for all struggle with life now and hereafter! Yes, indeed, you must be very happy. You do not know what it is to long for a loved one, loved as in a dream, without one word of her voice to recall, only the face—the exquisite face—seen but twice, yet always present, always longed for in the heart's depths."

"What do you say, man? You have not found

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her yet? Why, what on earth have you been doing? Amsterdam is not such a great place. Search it from end to end. Surely, you will find her."

"I have been searching, Rembrandt; indeed, I have spent nearly all my time in that way since you left, but I have not found her. She has not come again to Hendrik's. She has not been near this place. I think she must have been alarmed that evening when you followed her in the street. I did see a young man once by the Dam who much resembled her, indeed, he might have been her brother, but her have I not seen and I am weary with searching and waiting."

"Well, Albrecht, I am sorry. From my heart I am sorry, but do not be discouraged. I will make inquiry among my patrons and those who come here with them. Surely, so distinguished a person as I am sure she is, cannot remain long hidden in Amsterdam—not in these troubled days when everybody is watching everybody else, and paying more attention to the business of other people than to his own."

"It may be as you say, dear Rembrandt. I know you will help me all you can, but I am dispirited and have little heart for anything. I have even forgotten about my print-selling, and I fear I am but a sorry man of business."

"Trouble not yourself about the prints, Albrecht. I myself will buy them. I shall soon need them all, for there is not one among them that is not most beautiful. My Saskia will delight in them and so shall I. But first I must get

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the house. When said you the Jew would return?"

"I think he was to come again to-morrow. But I will never let you buy all these prints. You cannot afford it yet, and you shall not do it out of kindness to me."

"I can afford what I please. Talk not to me of that, but I must to my work again. I have been too long idle. Soon, my friend, you will see my coffers brimming over with gold."

"It may be so, Rembrandt, yes, I think it will be so, but my heart is heavy and I fear some evil is coming. I suppose it is because I have been lonely, and sad, and discouraged. I am a stranger in a strange land, you know, and I cannot find the lady of my love. Yet now will I again be of good cheer, for your words that come from your love, already have brightened my heart. No man should give way to melancholy when he has such a friend as you are, Rembrandt."

Thus passed the evening in conversation between these two friends. Rembrandt, with the somewhat selfish eagerness of the lover, returning again and again to Saskia and his plans about her—Albrecht, for the most part unselfishly listening, but unable to resist occasional reference to his own quest, and the best means for attaining success. When they parted for the night it was late and both were weary.

CHAPTER XX

Saskia's Letter

THE next morning Rembrandt again took up his work with that fervid intensity always peculiar to him, but now deepened and made even more vivid by the constant presence of love's inspiration. There was no lack of patrons, and the skill of the painter seemed greater than ever before, so that his favor grew day by day, and the gold came to him in full measure, even fuller than he had expected.

He had several conferences with the Jew about the Breedestraat house and finally the purchase was made. Rembrandt paid a considerable sum in money, but left a large amount on mortgage. The seller was quite willing this should be done, for Lazarus had persuaded him, and indeed had fully convinced him, that there could be no risk in trusting such a man—already on the flood-tide of success—to any amount he might desire. It is needless to add that Lazarus had secured a very considerable sum for himself as some slight compensation for his arduous labors in making so excellent a bargain for his friend Rembrandt and so good a sale for the owner of the house. He was in fact paid well by both parties to this transaction.

When the affair was concluded, Lazarus re-

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turned to his house, which was not far from the one which Rembrandt had just bought. He sent for his friend Isaac, and he caused a flagon of good Rhenish to be brought—also a cold fowl. Isaac came in a short time, and his hard wrinkled face lighted up with an unwonted good-humor, as he looked at the feast spread on the table awaiting him.

“I have got you a little something here to eat, and to drink, my friend Isaac. Take that chair by the table, and I will give you one glass of Rhine wine.”

“Well! well! friend Lazarus, that is very good. What for do you do all that? Did you find a diamond? What has happened? Tell me, quick.”

“Why will you always be in such a hurry? Take that wine, and that chicken; then you will feel good and warm, and you will listen while I tell you all about it.”

“Yes! yes! it is good, and I am hungry—but I was too busy to eat very much this day.”

“All right then—I wager you have made some money the same way as you always do, and that will make you like better this what I have to tell you. You did not forget that painter fellow what I told you about—that Rembrandt?”

“No, Lazarus, I never forgot him. Has he paid back the gold what I give you when you bought that Rubens painting for him?”

“He has not yet paid that, but he has done better. He has bought him a house here in the Breedestraat, and he only pays part, and he goes in debt for the rest. Now comes he here, and lives with

us, and he will buy other things, and you and I will let him have the gold. By and by he will pay a little, and then he will pay a little more, and we charge him much interest, and we pay ourselves, as interest, all that he pays, and then he goes on some long time, it may be—but that time will come, Isaac, when we get all he has. I know that painter fellow—he is what they call a spend-thrift. You will see, I tell you truly we get all he has some day.”

“Lazarus, my friend, be cautious. That is not like you to take risks on one man that way—but then, you say he has already gone in debt, deep for that house—well! I must say there are some hopes in it. Yes, he will hang himself, if he gets rope enough, and you and I will give him the rope. Wasn’t that your thought, my dear friend? Am I right about that?”

“Sure, and the more the better. There is also another thing. What do you think, Isaac, that painter he will get him married pretty soon, and then what will he want to buy? Ah! we have our chance, Isaac, and we will soon have all that this painter gets, if the God of Abraham befriends us, and befriend us he will in so good a matter, for are we not bidden to spoil the Egyptians?”

“What do you want with me, Lazarus? Something you want. Ah! I knew that when I saw that Rhine wine, and that chicken. Things like that come not for nothing. What is it, friend? Speak you it out, but ask me not too much, for there is little gold now in my coffer, because you take so much that only a little could be left.”

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"Well, Isaac, I want not much, no, not anything just now—but, by and by, when this painter begins buying things, then, Isaac, be sure that you have gold enough so that I can give him what he wants, and you shall have your interest, yes, good interest—fifty per cent. perhaps. Ah! you see what I mean, my friend, and you will always have the money in the coffer ready when I want it—eh! You will have it!"

"So much as I can I will do—but Lazarus, I am not rich. Oh! fifty per cent. you say? Well, I might agree to that, but why not more?"

"Well, Isaac, it will be more, I think—but you wait awhile, and be friendly to this painter when he comes here with his young wife soon he will love us very much, and he will think we are the very best friends he has, and then all will go well."

"That is true. Yes! yes! friend Lazarus, you are indeed a true son of Jacob, and I will help you all I can, for the plan is a wise one."

For some time longer these worthy Hebrews lingered at the table, enjoying to the full the Rhenish and the fowl, enjoying still more the thought of Rembrandt's money coming to their greedy hands. The plan was deep laid, and full of subtlety. It required much knowledge of character on the part of Lazarus, and it needed also a great deal of patience.

It was not likely that a painter, already so celebrated, and overwhelmed with orders for far more portraits than he could paint, would soon be in serious straits for money. Lazarus knew this well, but he counted on the painter's spending all

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he earned—and more! and more! yes! that was the root of the matter. If he did that, the Jew's harvest would surely come. If he did not do that, nothing would be lost, for there would be ample security for all advances made. Well did Lazarus know that he and Isaac could afford to bide their time. This they agreed to do and patiently they waited in the Jew quarter, counting the days until their victim should come to dwell near them.

Rembrandt was counting the days also, but with far different thoughts. He was longing for Saskia. It seemed as if he could not wait for the time when she would be all his own in the home he had prepared for her, and yet his passion for his art was so great that his love interfered not a whit with his power, and never had he been more persistent, more absolutely defiant of fatigue, more engrossed in each new work that engaged his teeming brain and taxed all the powers of his brush and palette. These works were many, and greatly varied in subject. Men and women of high and low degree, young and old, beautiful, ugly, commonplace, thronged his studio. It seemed to matter not a particle what the subject might be. Its essence was sure to be caught with the keenness of a marvellous insight into the character and the precision of a hand and eye so trained as to be wellnigh perfect.

At last came a letter from Saskia :

MY OWN BELOVED:

Thou hast waited long for thy Saskia, too long it may be, but well thou knowest the waiting is

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not her fault. I am still sad because of Antje's death. I have had to stay with Maccovius, the stricken husband, whose grief would rend thy tender heart, my own. Now he finds some comfort in taking up again his work on theology, but still he is bowed down with grief. Nevertheless, he has bid me go to thee. Shall I come, dearest? Perhaps if thou hast not ceased to wish for her who loves thee, it might be that in June, in June? Oh! what am I saying? Well, I said it—yes, June was the month. Is not that a lovely month to be married—is that what I meant—I think you can hear my heart beating. Thou knowest what I would say. My true lord and master, wilt thou take thy Saskia in June? Now, indeed, I should not have said that. I meant but now not to speak thus, for I fear thou wilt think me unmaidenly, but my own Rembrandt, my prince of men, how can I help giving thee my love, for it is thine already, all, all thine and forever. Come to me then, dearest—was it in June I said?—and thou shalt find thy Saskia awaiting thee, ready to do thy bidding, and to follow thee through life. I am thine, perhaps too wholly thine, but I am proud of that, and I say it again and again. Some good voice whispers that to my Rembrandt's ear such words will sound sweet even if repeated o'er and o'er. Indeed, Saskia writes but ill, and can do little but tell her love, and tell it truly. I send the sweetest greeting from my heart of hearts. Thou wilt come soon, beloved, well I know it, to

Thine own,

SASKIA.

REMBRANDT

This letter was sent by a special messenger and it so chanced that Rembrandt was with his pupils in the great studio at the top of the house when the messenger placed it in his hands. Well knew he the writing of Saskia, and as he saw it on the letter his heart gave a wild bound, as though divining, without the reading, what the beloved maiden had written. There is a necromancy in love and it would not have been strange if Rembrandt could have read this letter of his chosen lady unopened as it lay there in his hand. Hastily he dismissed the pupils. There was to be no more instruction that day. He must be alone and without delay with that precious missive. How sweet and pure and light and tender it seemed, as it lay in his strong firm hand, how slow were the pupils in taking their leave! Could a man never have any time to himself? and the models, too, did it always need hours for them to get ready to go? Govert Flinck tarried a moment to say one shy, loving word to the man whom he adored.

"Master," he said, "I may wish you joy, I know, for I see a happy light in your eyes. May there always be joy for you, greatest of painters, dearest of friends!"

"Govert! Govert! what has come over you? I thank you for those kind words, but never indeed had I thought you loved a master such as Rembrandt has been—one who came to the studio always with a reproof, sometimes a stern one."

"Yes, I know, master, but Rembrandt's reproof

SASKIA'S LETTER

is worth more than the praise of all the other painters in Amsterdam."

"Ah! well! Govert, you say too pleasant things to me. I am a student, as you are. We are all striving up art's hill, and none will ever reach the top, but let us go as far as we can. Now, Govert, leave me, for I have but now received a letter which I would fain read."

"I go," said Flinck, and as he went away he murmured to himself, "Ah! the letter, the letter, that was it! It must be from the great master's love. Naught else could put such fire in his eyes." So murmuring, this favorite among Rembrandt's pupils left the studio and the painter was alone at last. Instantly he opened Saskia's letter. As he read the tender words, great waves of emotion swept over him until he was blind and deaf to all about him save the letter of his love. That was the world. Again and again he read it. Again and again he kissed it. After a long time he looked about him as a man dazed.

"I have been dreaming—no, there is the letter. She wrote it—I know—I know. It is a real letter surely. Her sweet hand lay there upon it. The very fragrance of Saskia is in it. June—June, she says. Oh! how can I bear this ecstasy—how wait until June? I must talk with someone or my heart will burst. Where, I wonder, might Albrecht be? There is none other to whom I would speak." He called Jan and bade him find Herr Albrecht if he could.

The boy went all over the house, but Albrecht was not there. "No, master," said Jan, "he is

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not here, but he was a little while ago, for I saw him, indeed I did; but he must have gone out, he must, and I didn't see him go, I didn't."

"You see but little at any time, Jan. That know I right well. Sit down there by the door and when Herr Albrecht comes tell him I would speak with him."

"Yes, master."

Rembrandt sat down in the dining-room, and waited for Albrecht, but he knew not how the time passed, for again and again he read Saskia's precious letter. "Where is that Albrecht, I wonder," said Rembrandt to himself, at last impatient for a word with the friend of his heart, even though hours had passed in the reading of this letter from the beloved.

"Jan, you must be asleep there. Surely, Herr Albrecht is here now. It is late."

"Nay, master, yea, master, is it late, yes, it is late, but he is not here, or I did not see him. I saw him not, master, no, I saw him not. But, master, perhaps he comes now. Aw! aw! why knock so loud? Why, master, nearly did he knock me off my seat."

"Get up, you sleepy head, and open the door. Albrecht is there, I know."

It was done, and the German came in. He was wet and weary—worse than all that he seemed discouraged.

"Oh! Rembrandt, I have been chasing a will-o'-the-wisp, and like all who do that I have fallen in the swamp. Nearly am I choked. Now, my friend, that's only a figure of speech, as they say,

SASKIA'S LETTER

but there's some truth in it for my tongue is dry and my throat is parched, and my mind is bewildered, and if that is not what happens to chasers of will-o'-the-wisps I'd like to know what does happen to them, or rather I shouldn't like to know. I know enough as it is. I followed her, no, I followed him. Where did I follow them both or each of them—was it one or two?"

"My dear friend Albrecht, I verily believe you have gone mad. What on earth are you talking about?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. Neither would you know if you had seen what I have seen, unless I am blind or dreaming, and haven't really seen anything."

"Oh! Albrecht, I was longing for your presence. I wanted to talk to you, to you alone of a precious letter from Saskia that has come but now. What sympathy can I get from you when you are in such a mood."

"Pardon, pardon, dear friend," said Albrecht. "I am a little confused, but we can talk of that on another day. You wished to speak to me, to confide in me? Oh! I will, indeed, listen most gladly. I will sympathize, help if I can. I have recovered myself now. See, the dream is over. What is it my Rembrandt would tell me?"

"I would tell you of the sweetest thing that ever happened to anyone in all the whole world. My Saskia has promised to marry me in June, in June—just think, Albrecht—that is but two months away!"

"Is it indeed so, dear friend, and the long wait-

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ing is nearly over? From my deepest heart I wish you joy. You deserve it. You have waited patiently—at least I mean patiently for you. Pardon me, friend. Why did I say that? I meant not to banter with you, but only to tell you how glad I am that your true great love is so soon to have its reward.”

“Yes, I know, Albrecht, I was sure your sympathy would be mine. It is very precious to me. In that great moment of my life there was none but you with whom I would share the secret of my joy. You will be with me, Albrecht, and help me in all the arrangements for the wedding, and the after-coming to that blessed home in the Breedestraat, which does not seem to me real at all, for the bliss which will fill it is all unknown, and far greater, I believe, than fancy can picture.”

“I will do all that I can for you, but now, indeed, dear friend, I must seek sleep. You must remember that my quest has not succeeded like yours, and I am very, very weary. None the less again I say I am glad for you. May sweet dreams come to your pillow to-night! Surely they will come. The night will be full of them. There will not be time to dream them all in many nights.”

And so the friends parted until the morrow.

CHAPTER XXI

Hildegarde to Undine

IF Albrecht had not been the most loving and least self-seeking of men, he might have been a little hurt because Rembrandt entirely forgot to inquire what was the cause of his trouble, and showed no interest in it whatever. Albrecht did think of this for a moment. He might with truth have called it selfishness—but he did not. He only said to himself, “Certainly, he must think only of Saskia. I would think only of my lady if I were in his happy place. Alas! Lord help me! I know not even her name, but I shall find her some day. I will, I will.” So he lay down to sleep.

This letter from Hildegarde to her friend Undine may help in the understanding of some of Albrecht’s trials and perplexities.

MY OWN BEST BELOVED FRIEND:

Now, you must promise before you read this that you will love me just as much afterward as you did before. But I don’t believe you will. I am afraid you will think I am no longer fit to associate with you—but no! you won’t think that, for you would not say even to yourself that you are a model and a pattern of all the virtues; and

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mind you, I don't say that because it is a set phrase and thought to be a pretty one. I said it because I meant it, and because it is true, and because I am so different from you, and I am sure I don't know what you will think when I tell you what I have done. I have played the maddest prank, but I don't care, I couldn't help it. Now, if you ever tell, Undine! I will never forgive you, no never. You must tear this letter into little pieces just as soon as you have read it.

You see I was getting frightened about being alone in the streets. You remember what I wrote you about one dreadful time when I was pursued and only rid myself of the man by threatening to call out the guard. I would have done it, too, Undine, but such things are not pleasant, and they make a maid's heart beat too quickly. Well! I had some other troubles of the same kind, though none so bad as that. These Dutchmen are rather slow and generally well behaved. They are not keen for adventures in romantic matters, and for the most part they are quite content with the young maiden they have chosen and abide with her very placidly; but there are exceptions, and these became disagreeable to me. Moreover, I did not find Hildebrand, and then I was troubled by being followed in the streets by one or two of these unusual Dutchmen. How could I find Hildebrand? Suddenly, boldly, I thought upon, and directly adopted a plan whereby my personal safety might be better assured, and I want you to know that your Hildegard values her personal safety highly. She may intrust herself

HILDEGARDE TO UNDINE

to a man some day, but, oh! what a hero he must be! and how intense his devotion! Perhaps it is just as well that I have not found him, for you know how mannish I am, how very well able to take care of myself. That masculine quality, my dear, made me do what I have done. To all outward appearance I am now a man indeed—cloak, and doublet, and hose, and all the other things. You know what they are, I suppose—if you don't, you won't learn from me. And there is a sword at my side which has nearly broken my neck a half dozen times, for it will keep swinging in such a way that no one could help stumbling over it. Now I want you to understand that I am only a man when I go out in the streets, and to the various places where I make inquiries about my cousin. I have not been bold enough to go to many places where I should meet only men, but I am gaining courage, and after awhile I may even dare to go to Rembrandt's studio, where I am almost certain some of the pupils, if not the great painter himself, will know something of Hildebrand. I am sure he must have been there, and I think something must have happened to him, or I should have seen him in the streets ere now. But this undertaking needs courage, and a most perfect disguise. I must practise a little more before I dare attempt it. Meanwhile, I have my adventures, and I believe I enjoy them thoroughly. I tremble a little sometimes; I have passed that German in the streets more than once, and it was too comical to see him look at me. He seemed so puzzled—but I held

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my head high, and went on with a swagger and he did not follow me, though I believe he had thought of doing that very thing. I wonder how he knows my face so well, though perhaps it is no stranger than my own remembrance of him. Once I passed him when it was raining. Then I was in my ordinary attire. That time he did follow me for awhile, but I skipped through a very narrow dark street in which, as it happens, there is a queer kind of a back entrance through a court into the house where I am lodging; I gained my room, hastily made myself a cavalier and then went out again by the front door, and marched toward the Dam, even thinking that I might have the boldness to go to Rembrandt's studio, but my courage failed me when I saw the German again, walking along with a disconsolate air, his hands clasped behind him, and his eyes fixed on the ground. He looked up as I passed, and the same puzzled look came over his face that I had seen before. He did not follow me, but I am sure my disguise cannot be perfect. He sees some resemblance to the woman he seeks. Is it not all very romantic, dear Undine? Now I am perfectly certain that this German is devoting his time very largely to a pursuit of your humble servant, and I am very much inclined to think that I know the reason; but how on earth a man can be so daft as he appears to be about a woman with whom he never exchanged a word, is something I cannot understand in the least. It is, of course, very flattering and really, you know, not unpleasant; for I fear him not in the least. He is a good man

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I know. No villain ever had so noble a face. It may be that I jumped at a conclusion as to what he is doing, but I think not. Perhaps I'll let him find me some day. Then I would know soon enough. Dear me! I am consumed with curiosity about this matter. I may get myself into trouble, but not just yet. The adventure is too interesting. I shall keep on just as I am doing, and by and by I'll find Hildebrand, and then when I have a protector, I can do as I please about letting this German find me. And now good-by, dearest sister, I will write again after I have gone into the lion's den—namely, Rembrandt's studio. Devotedly your own,

HILDEGARDE.

After sending this letter the young maiden became lost in thought—which was, for her, a rather uncommon event, for her natural liveliness of disposition brooked little reverie. This exigency, however, required thinking, and Hildegarde knew it well. She meant to think about changing her disguise so that it might be more perfect, and she did think about that a part of the time, and she meant to think of the visit to Rembrandt's studio, which she had made up her mind was necessary. She did think about that also—a part of the time—but it was most curious how much of the time of thought was given to the mysterious young man who seemed dogging her footsteps. It was natural that a very beautiful young woman should be curious about so strange a thing, and certain it was that Hildegarde would find out if she could

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who this young man was, and what he wanted with her. She did not associate him with Rembrandt's studio, as she had only seen him at Hendrik's and in the streets. If she had known he lived there, it may be that the proposed visit would never have been made. At last Hildegarde roused herself with a surprised shake from this unaccustomed reverie.

"Why, what can have come over me?" she said to herself, raising her head and pushing back some of the lovely curls that had fallen over her low, white brow. "I must have been dreaming—but no, it is not all a dream. I must change that disguise and find Hildebrand at once. Things cannot go on this way much longer. It may be very exciting, interesting, and romantic, but it is dangerous, and I must find my cousin. Who could have thought that I would be in Amsterdam so long as this without finding him?"

Hildegarde changed her disguise entirely. Instead of a cavalier she became a student, with the long cloak and broad-brimmed hat habitually worn by them, worn also by artists, burgomasters, distinguished people of all kinds. After a good deal of trouble she managed to arrange a mustache and chin whisker, whose falsity would escape detection unless closely examined. Thus attired she went out the back way and returning to the front door, knocked and inquired for Marjorie. The old woman did not recognize her. Neither did Wilhelm, who happened to be in the little room by the front door, where he had been trying for a long time to write a letter which he meant to send home if he

HILDEGARDE TO UNDINE

ever finished it, but first it was to be shown to the mistress. When these two faithful servants failed to recognize her, Hildegarde felt sure that her disguise was complete, and she resolved to go to Rembrandt's studio without further delay. She herself knew something of painting, and was a devoted admirer and lover of art in all its forms, therefore it would be easy to give a reason for desiring to study Rembrandt's methods, and even to become his pupil for a time, if she dared take so bold a step.

This most unusual course of action, chosen by the adventurous maiden, was justified by the very peculiar circumstances about her, both as to her own position and the troubled times in which she was living. She dared not go about Amsterdam without any disguise, for if she were discovered her father and her would-be husband would soon know of it, and then good-by to her dreams of liberty. Moreover, the lawless soldiers in those days were greatly to be dreaded by an unprotected young woman. To assume the rôle she chose was probably the best thing she could do, and her bold, brave nature well fitted her to carry out such a part.

CHAPTER XXII

Hildegarde in Disguise

THERE were but two months now to pass before the appointed time for Rembrandt's marriage. The painter's heart was full to overflowing with the tenderest of thoughts, the sweetest of dreams. Saskia was not in Amsterdam. After the death of her sister Antje she had left Franeker, and gone to the little town of Beldt, in the southern part of Friesland, where she stayed for a time with another sister, Hiskia, who was married to Gerritt van Loo, the Secretary of the Commune. This separation was hard to bear at such a time, but his love only nerved Rembrandt to work more and more intensely on his art. He could not be idle even if he would. Not even the deep, true passion which possessed him could prevent complete absorption in his painting while engaged upon his canvas. When he laid aside his brush he would give full sway to his tender dreams, and then he was so abstracted that he would hardly speak a word. He was dull company at this time. It was bad enough when the one passion for painting possessed him, for this made him unsociable and fond of solitude; but now that there were two passions—one about as strong as the other, to all

HILDEGARDE IN DISGUISE

outward seeming—well! poor Albrecht thought his friend had quite lost his wits and wondered whether he would ever find them again.

One evening, however, after an unusually long day of hard work in the studio with his pupils, Rembrandt was quite animated, and began of his own accord to talk. Albrecht looked up in amazement, wondering what could have happened.

“My dear friend,” said Rembrandt, “a young man came to the studio to-day—a student of art. He said he had come all the way from Germany to see my pictures and to study my methods. He interested me very much. I know not exactly why. Perhaps it was because of a peculiar mixture of boldness and timidity which I do not remember noting in any others of the many young men who come to the studio. Perhaps it was the noble beauty of his face, which was very striking. I believe I will ask him to let me paint him, for he is surely a most unusual subject.”

“Did he tell you his name, Rembrandt?” said Albrecht, much interested when he heard the young man was a German.

“Yes, he said it was Hermann von Lebenthal, I believe. Yes, that was the name. He seemed to have something else on his mind besides art work. He was inquiring about a cousin whom he called Hildebrand.’ There was a young man of that name—a German, who came to the studio some time ago, but I do not know what became of him. It seems to me he stayed but a short time. Ah! yes, I remember now, he was taken ill with some fever.

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You know strangers are often overcome by such disorders when they come to the Low Countries. It was selfish of me not to find out where he had gone, and whether he had proper care; but I was very much absorbed at the time, and scarcely noticed that he was no longer in the studio. I have no idea where he went, but I dare say some of the pupils might know. I will make inquiries to-morrow, for the strange young man seemed very anxious to find him."

"Rembrandt! let me help you in this search. If the young man is a German, as you say, it is my duty, as well as my pleasure, to find out about him, and to care for him if he is in trouble."

"Be it as you will, Albrecht. Come to the studio to-morrow and inquire among the pupils. I dare say Govert Flinck could tell you. He is such a kind-hearted youth that it is more than likely he took care of the stranger himself, or at least saw that everything needful was done for him."

"That will I do most gladly," said Albrecht. "I feel that I am of little use here. I thought I should long since have sold all my prints and gone home again, but I have neglected my business just because I am possessed by the lovely face of a girl, and I spend most of the time in wandering about in search of her. I know I am a fool, but I cannot help it. The face has bewitched me, I verily believe. I would be glad to do something really useful. It would make more of a man of me. I am ashamed of myself."

"Talk not thus, friend Albrecht. Surely it is

HILDEGARDE IN DISGUISE

no disgrace to a man that he should love a woman, even if he has never spoken a word to her. Indeed that is just what I should have expected of you. If you had loved like other people I should have been disappointed. I could have sworn there would be some incredible romance about your love. Such is your fate plainly to be seen in your face, but the romance will be a happy one in the end. Ah! yes, you will be a happier man even than I am, because you are more lovable and not torn to pieces by conflicting emotions."

"Rembrandt, I will not hear you speak such words. What, am I to be compared to you in anything for one moment—you the great master, and also the true lover—I nothing at all, with no achievement; worse yet, no power of achievement?"

"Come, come Albrecht, you are downhearted, man, and I wonder not that so it is. It is well that you should take up this matter of the sick German. It will occupy your mind. Perhaps, too, you may even find out from him something about the maiden you seek. They are both Germans, and Germans are not so plenty in Amsterdam."

"I thank you heartily for your kind words. I will do as you say, and even now I feel a new hope and courage in my heart."

Thus passed the evening in pleasant converse. When Rembrandt did break away for a time from his absorbing passions he was one of the most charming of men. The immense power of

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the man gave weight to all he said. His keen insight and eager impetuosity lent wings to his words sometimes, and made him really eloquent. Such moods were not common with him, but their rareness made them more precious. Well worthy was he of the name "Master," so beautifully given by the Germans to their art heroes. Reverence rather than love, or, perhaps, love blended with reverence is given to these masters. No more familiar love must they hope to gain for the very reason that they stand so far above the common level of man that the heads of most are uplifted in looking toward them, which is not the attitude of love but rather of worship. But when one of these "Masters" throws off the mysteries of his inspirations, and talks as man to man with real human sympathy, there is a thrill such as would come if a god stepped off his pedestal and took you by the hand.

Such thrills came often to the patient Albrecht while he lived with the man who had become his hero, but they would not have come at all except for the patience that was willing to withstand days and weeks when the great painter seemed made of ice or stone, so utterly insensible was he to the doings, the thoughts, the sufferings, the joys, the lives, even, of those about him. Such a man was not likely to be popular. His nature demanded great capacity for hero-worship from those about him. It was well for him that Saskia and Albrecht were born hero-worshippers. Those who do not worship heroes are apt to hate them. There is no middle ground, for the hero once

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squarely placed before the vision of the mind cannot be overlooked, because he is too large. He cannot be passed by with indifference, because his genius is too assertive, even obtrusive.

Now, Rembrandt knew little, and cared less about what people thought of him; but to make enemies was not of happy augury for the Friesland maiden rapturously waiting in the little town of Beldt for the consummation of her joy. It was well that no shadow fell upon her then. It was well that none fell upon him. There was much passionate joy for both in the time to come. The lowering of the storm-cloud was not seen, nor was there even the faintest muttering that might betoken the coming of a desolating blast. All was peace that night in the little house at Beldt, where slept Saskia, dreaming of her lover, and in the painter's home, where Rembrandt in his dreams wooed again the merry maiden who had given him her love, and where even perturbed Albrecht lay down with a certain peace in his heart born of a hope that the morrow might bring him something that would speed him on his quest. There was one who slept little, and that was the fair Hildegarde. The adventures of the day had so excited her that sleep was impossible. She had played her part to perfection, and she knew she had not been discovered, and she had found out that Hildebrand had been at the studio, but had suddenly disappeared. No one seemed to know where he had gone, but Govert Flinck had told the students the young man was ill with fever, and he had found a place

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where proper care and attendance could be had. Govert Flinck himself was not there at the time, and, therefore, Hildegarde resolved to repeat her visit, seeking to meet Flinck, and then she would surely find her cousin.

CHAPTER XXIII

Albrecht Seeks Hildebrand

THE next morning Albrecht was in the studio before the pupils came. He meant to meet Flinck before he began his work, and get a few words with him about the young German of whom Rembrandt had spoken. He had not long to wait. Flinck came quite early, and Albrecht forthwith acquainted him with the errand he had undertaken.

“Ah, yes! Ah, yes! Herr Albrecht,” said the kind-hearted Flinck. “I wonder much I spoke to you not before about this, knowing as I did that you were a German. I am much to blame. I hope you will forgive me, but I think indeed you could not have done much. You did not come here until after the young man was taken ill. I saw it was a very serious disease, and I went to Dr. Tulp, whom I know very well, and begged him to help this poor stranger if he could. Meanwhile I took Hildebrand to my own room. After a time Dr. Tulp came to see him, and he showed great kindness. He said the patient needed most of all change of air. Now this good doctor knew of a place at Egmont an Zee, where dwelt some humble folk who were glad to take care of those he sent to them, asking only a small reward.

REMBRANDT

These people had a farm-house quite near the sea, and there, said the good doctor, will the air do more for this young man than any medicine I could give him."

"How kind that was of you, Govert! and how very kind of Dr. Tulp, that great man, to take so much trouble about my poor fellow-countryman! I thank you with all my heart."

"Nay! Nay! Herr Albrecht, it was but a trifle. I am heartily glad all was so well arranged. I confess I was troubled for a time. Certainly would the young man have died had he remained here, and I doubt if any but Dr. Tulp could have saved his life."

"And where is this Egmont an Zee?—that is what you called it, is it not?"

"Yes, why you ought to know where that is—but I forgot you are not a Dutchman. That is where dwelt the famous Counts of Egmont. Surely you remember how Philip II. foully slew one of them, who went with Count Horn to him as ambassador in the early days of the fearful war."

"Surely, yes, I remember that awful deed, but I knew not where dwelt the famous counts. Is it far from here?"

"Nay. Egmont an Zee is not very far away—yet is the journey not an easy one, and for a sick man it is hard indeed, but the good doctor took charge of everything, and one of his pupils went with Hildebrand to take care of him on the way and see that he was well lodged. It was a kind deed. I would gladly have gone myself, but I

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was not needed. All was done that could be done, and Dr. Tulp has told me that the young man arrived safely, and that all is going well with him, at least as well as could possibly be hoped, but he is still very ill and weak. ”

“ I must go to him, at once,” said Albrecht. “ It is my duty. Surely the presence of one of his own countrymen will do much to restore him—at least, it will make him less lonesome. Tell me the way, good Govert, I would start at once.”

“ Indeed, I believe you are in the right. I wish I had thought of this before. I wonder at my thoughtlessness, but, indeed, I believe that in Rembrandt’s presence everyone becomes absorbed in art, just as he is. All else seems to be forgotten, in the studio, at least. That must be my excuse, though well I know it is a poor one. Let me come to your room, and while you prepare for your journey I will tell you how best to go to Egmont.”

They descended to Albrecht’s chamber, and it was not long before the necessary preparations were made.

Afterward Albrecht sought Rembrandt, and acquainted him with his purpose. After he had heard all, Rembrandt said :

“ Yes, it is well to do as you have planned, and it is a deed quite worthy of your loving, unselfish heart. Would I were more like you ! But, Albrecht, mind you, my wedding is but a month away, now, and you have promised to be with me then.”

“ Fear not, my friend, I will come back in good

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time, and will do for you what I can; though well I wot there will be little need of my help or presence at the time when Rembrandt's love is crowned. Still, fain would I be there to look afar off upon such a joy. If a friend's sympathy can add aught to your happiness you shall have all that I can give. And now, farewell, for the time."

"Farewell, Albrecht, and may all good be with you."

Thus they parted, and in a short time Albrecht was again on one of those canal-boats which he knew so well. Thus would he go to Alkmaar, and there seek conveyance by land to Egmont.

Rembrandt went back to his studio, saddened for the moment at the parting, but still intent upon his art. He went on with the instructions to his pupils which had been begun when Albrecht's message came to him, but it seemed this morning that he was destined to interruption—a thing which always irritated him beyond measure.

The boy, Jan, knew this well, and hardly dared go near the master again so soon with another message. However, there was no help for it, since the young stranger who had been there yesterday had come again and craved instant admittance. So Jan crept softly toward the painter as he came from one of the little rooms where the pupils worked alone.

"Master, master," he said, timidly.

"You there again, you varlet? Know you not that these are hours of work? How dare you thus break in upon my time?"

"Yes, yes, I know I know, master, but, indeed,

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I could not help it, for he would come in, yes, he would, and he said you would see him, yes, he did."

"Who, who, you idiot?"

"Yes, I know, master, who? Nay, I know not, yes, I know—he who came yester morn—the man in black."

"Why did you not say so at first? Have you no wits at all? Tell him to come up," said Rembrandt, suddenly softening, for that young man had interested him strangely, and he was bent upon painting him. Presently Hildegarde entered, and with graceful bearing approached Rembrandt.

"Again, good-morning to you, great master! Yesterday so charmed was I with what I saw and learned here that scarce could I wait for another day that I might once more begin a study of your works, and especially if I may crave pardon of your indulgence, would I have some little converse with your pupils, that I may from them learn to know something of the secret of your teaching, and that I may get some news of my cousin."

"It seems to me, young man, that you are marvellously fond of pupils and teaching. Methinks you are not yet very old. Think you of founding a school in Germany? Nay, better wait awhile—but you Germans sometimes are wonders in your youth. Yes, yes, there is also that matter about your cousin. Come, I will make a bargain with you, and on the issue shall depend the freedom of my studio. Paint you a picture of me and I will

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paint one of you. If the pupils adjudge yours the better you shall go and come as you will, if mine—well then you may still come as you please. Oh! I need hardly say I was but jesting. The real truth is that I want to paint your portrait. Will you come to my studio and sit for me instead of going about talking with these fellows here? That can do you but little good, except perhaps finding the dear cousin; but if you will let me paint you I will at least try to show you something of my art, such as it is. Do you agree?"

Here indeed was a situation quite unforeseen. The very idea that the greatest master of Holland should paint her in such a garb made Hildergarde tremble from head to foot. A vivid blush mantled to her very brow and she turned away to escape Rembrandt's eyes—but her courage did not quite leave her. As she turned from him she bent down her head, and said, in a voice that was audible though not very firm, "I am too much honored, indeed, quite overcome, when I think you wish to paint me. There could be no greater compliment. I thank you, but it is impossible for me to do what you say. No! no! my time is limited. I must go home. I must study but a little more with your pupils. Then I must go. Will you please let me speak again to some of the students, especially would I find one Govert Flinck, who studies here, as I am told? Is he here to-day?"

Rembrandt looked in blank astonishment upon this youth. The leading people of Amsterdam were waiting their turn for a portrait by him, and

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this young German, while apparently enamoured of his art, refused a request to be painted simply for the artist's pleasure. There was some mystery here. Rembrandt looked again, and more closely at the youth—but even his practised eye did not detect the truth. The disguise was very perfect. There was, it is true, a feminine quality in the wonderfully handsome face, but with mustache and beard to gainsay it, this was not so strong as necessarily to make certain that the wearer of the long black coat and the hat like Rembrandt's own was a woman.

"Now, in good sooth," said Rembrandt after a little pause. "It is hard for me to believe that you have come here for the reason that you profess. If, indeed, you love my art, and wish to study my methods, what better opportunity could you have than to see me paint your own portrait? Not many here in Amsterdam would refuse such an offer as I have made to you, no matter how little they knew, or cared to know about art."

"Ah, great master," said Hildegarde. "I humbly ask your pardon. Indeed I deserve not the honor you would confer upon me, and yet I thank you with all my heart. It is true that I love your art, and wish to study it, but I have told you that I seek a cousin who is dear to me, and much I fear there is something amiss with him, else should I have found him ere now. Will you not forgive my impatience? Supposing he were ill! Why, I should have been long ago at his side."

"Now, fair sir, trouble not yourself about him,

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for I believe he is already well cared for. Govert, Govert Flinck, will you come here a moment?"

Flinck emerged directly from the little cell where, like the other pupils, he was painting alone.

"What would you with me, master?" he said.

"I would make you acquainted with this young man. Hermann von Lebenthal! This is Govert Flinck, a pupil whom I love, and who loves me, I think. I believe he can tell you all you want to know about the cousin who interests you so deeply."

"I am glad indeed to meet you, sir," said Hildegarde, "and I thank you for your kindness, Mynheer Rembrandt."

"You are welcome. Perhaps later you will be in a more gracious mood about the portrait. For the time I will leave you, since my work is pressing." So saying, the painter went away to resume his labors among the students.

"Of whom is it you would know, sir? I will help you most gladly if I can."

"It is of my Cousin Hildebrand. Was he not here some little time ago? Know you what has befallen him?"

"Now this is passing strange," said Flinck. "Why, only this very day did a young German come to me inquiring about this same Hildebrand, and I told him all I knew. Moreover, he has but now departed to take care of him."

"Take care of him? Why, what is the matter with him? I must go to him at once. It is I that must take care of him. Who is this German? What has he to do with Hildebrand?"

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"Not so fast, if you please, good sir. I will answer your questions in fair order if you give me time—but we Dutchmen are a little slow, you know. Now let me see if I can remember all the questions. What is the matter with him? you said?"

"Yes, yes," said Hildegarde, impatiently.

"He had a fever, a very bad one, and I asked Dr. Tulp to see him and tell what should be done."

"A fever, you say, a bad one! Oh! where is he? Let me go to him at once."

"Now there is another question. 'Where is he?' Better let me tell you the story in my own poor way, and soon will you know all I know."

Hildegarde restrained herself as well as she could, and by degrees she learned all that Govert Flinck had told Albrecht. She was greatly confused and excited, for this illness of her cousin, and his removal to the sea-shore quite upset her plans, and she was at a loss as to what was best to do.

"Who, said you, was this German who went to him, Mynheer Flinck? I think you mentioned not his name."

"Truly, sir, I know him not well myself. His name is Albrecht von Stoltzing, and he is a dear friend of the master here, who can tell you more of him than can I."

"Stoltzing! Ah! that is a Nuremberg name. We are not only compatriots but neighbors. Right glad am I to know that my cousin has such an one to tend him. I thank you, sir, for your

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courtesy. Forgive me my impatience. I am somewhat agitated. I have sought my cousin long, and he is very dear to me, and the knowledge of his illness has quite upset me. I will not longer keep you from your work."

"You have given me no trouble at all. I wish I could do more for you. If you go to Egmont an Zee you will find the journey not a hard one, but tedious, perhaps, to any who are not content, as we Dutch are, to move very slowly. But, surely, you will see the master again before you go?" Hildegarde had already turned toward the door and was in the act of leaving.

"Oh! yes, yes, certainly. I quite forgot. I am rude, and he has been so kind to me. How could I be so ungracious?"

Flinck went in search of Rembrandt, who came presently.

"So! so, young sir, Flinck tells me you are leaving us directly. Methinks this cousin must be wondrous dear that he should so powerfully move you. Ah! well, you Germans are very affectionate. That have I found in Albrecht. Never did tenderer heart beat in a man's breast. And the portrait! I beg you disappoint me not of that. My heart is bent upon it, for, young man, though I am not given to flattery I cannot refrain from saying that I have rarely seen a handsomer face than your own, though it is most oddly unlike that of any German student I ever saw."

"I beg you to forgive me, and to believe that I feel deeply your over-kind words, but it is really impossible that I should stay now. I thank you

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for your kindness, and I bid you farewell, but I am sure that we shall meet again and under different circumstances. I hope much that my time will be my own, and that I may have the great honor that you have offered me."

"With all my heart, I join you in that hope. Farewell, sir."

Hildegarde left the studio and emerged from the great door which Jan had opened for her. Her heart was throbbing so that she nearly fainted, but with a strong effort she regained the wonderful self-control which had carried her through these two days. Even when she had first seen Rembrandt, and recognized him as the man who had followed her in the street in so surprising a way, she did not betray herself, being sustained partly by seeing at once that he did not recognize her. She had dared to go back again when her errand had failed of success on the first day, and the second visit had been much more exciting than the first, both because of the proposed portrait, and the news she heard of Hildebrand. Her nerve and will-power had carried her through this most trying ordeal; but now came the reaction, and she felt weak, frightened, and confused. Of course, she suspected that this Albrecht who had gone to Egmont was the same man of whom Rembrandt had spoken before, and in all probability it was he who had followed her in the street. She seemed like a poor fly who has flown straight into the spider's web. With the greatest effort she reached at last her lodging, and sank exhausted upon the bed. Her brain was in a whirl. What

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was she to do next? How go to Egmont, where the young German already was? If she went, should she go disguised? No, that would not do. Her fiery blush answered that question. But to go openly after what had happened—why, that seemed quite as unmaidenly. Moreover, Flinck would know whether or not she had been to Egmont just as soon as Albrecht returned. Why had she told both him and Rembrandt she meant to go there? Alas! alas! she would soon be discovered, and shamed forever! At last her woman's tears came to her relief, and, after a time, the nerve-tension was somewhat relaxed, and she began to think and reason a little more calmly. There must be some way of escape. She would hit upon some plan, but not now. She was still too tired. Better take some refreshment, of which she was sadly in need, and rest until she fully recovered from the severe strain she had undergone.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Wedding

SASKIA'S wedding-day was drawing near. In a little while now the master of her heart would come to claim her, and she was to be his, all his, never again to suffer weary months of absence, while the heart ached with longing for the presence of the beloved. All this time of separation, all the sorrow that came from Antje's long illness and her death, had but deepened and intensified the great love which filled her heart to overflowing. Saskia was almost ashamed to be thus mastered by her passion, yet she gloried in it as the greatest, sweetest, most wonderful, mysteriously blessed feeling that ever her life had known.

On one of these June days, not long before the wedding-time, she sat with her sister Hiskia in the little sitting-room of Gerritt van Loo's house at Bildt. The wall was wainscoted more than half-way to the ceiling, and the wainscoting was painted blue. Above it the wall was white, and the ceiling was raftered with the brownish-yellow beams and boards that were so loved by all Dutchmen. It was a small room and a very simple one. There were a few ornaments, mostly of Delft pottery and shining brass. Without those no Dutch house would be complete; and there were some

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carved high-backed chairs, for Gerritt van Loo was Secretary of the Commune and could afford some luxuries. Both Saskia and her sister were busy with needle-work, fashioning dainty garments for the bride, and making ready a goodly store of linen for the future housewife. It was to Saskia a task of trembling joy, for with every stitch she seemed to be binding her heart closer to his. They were sitting by one of the latticed windows which looked out upon a little garden behind the house. At the end of the garden was a trench filled with water, and this, instead of a fence, surrounded the green meadow beyond, where the cattle were grazing. Farther away toward the horizon rose the dykes that held up a canal, and on one of these a great windmill stood, its sails ceaselessly rising and falling with a sweep full of power and poetry. Against the blue sky rose the mill with its revolving sails, and high above them rolled through the azure heaven white clouds, wind swept, from the Zuyder Zee over the land of Friesland.

"Look, dear sister, look," said Saskia, putting down her work. "Is it not beautiful? See the meadow and the mill, the sky and the clouds! Oh! it is too beautiful. Sister dear, I fear I ought not to be so happy. How can I be when Antje died so little while ago and there was all that long, sad illness before? Sister, I did suffer, you cannot know how much, and I am sad still when I think of her; but if I were not happy in my love I would not be worthy of him. I would not bring a sad heart to my Rembrandt. He called me al-

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ways his merry maiden, and that mean I to be, else would I disappoint him; yet more than that also hope I to be, for a wife should help her husband besides giving him joy. That is true, Hiskia, is it not?"

"Dearest, loveliest sister, Saskia, never maiden was better and truer than thou art. Cherish that power of joy-giving which is thine from God. Seek not to restrain it. There will be suffering enough, there always is, and never is there too much joy—such pure innocent joy as thou canst give, sweet sister. Oh! Rembrandt is indeed a fortunate man! All the honors his art has won are as nothing compared to this treasure of a perfect love which thou dost give him."

"Sister, I will not hear such words. Thou knowest not Rembrandt. He is a prince of men. There lives no woman who could give him what he deserves."

"Nay, sister, rather would I believe there lives no man who is fully worthy of the perfect devotion of a pure and lovely woman. Oh! I know he is very great, and I am proud and glad that such an one has loved my sister; nevertheless, it is as I say—he should be most grateful for such a blessing, nor do I doubt he is."

"Dear sister, if only my love can make him happy, I ask for nothing else. There is not joy enough in his daily life. He works too hard. He is too much alone. Oh! yes, I see! I know I can brighten his life. God has given me this to do, and I thank Him for so sweet a task."

"It is a task that thou wilt well fulfil, and sure

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I am thine happiness will ever be in thy devotion to him. May God bless and keep thee ever, dear sister. Now must I leave thee for a time, for I see the lads are going to the meadow, and I must make ready the pans for the milk."

Hiskia rose and went toward Saskia. She bent over and kissed the fair white brow that shone out so purely among the mischievous ringlets that were ever playing about it in defiance of restraint.

When her sister had gone, Saskia's hands fell idly upon her lap. She looked out dreamily toward the sky. There were the intense blue and the dazzling white, the unfathomable depths of tenderness, the purity almost divine. It was a fit emblem of her love, though the maiden knew it not. The beauty indeed came sweetly over her. Her heart beat quicker, and her bosom rose and fell with the movements of the clouds as higher and higher they rose toward heaven, but her conscious thoughts were of him and his coming. Almost, she thought, she could hear the step of the master, as he came to claim her, so near now was the time. Then came a blush at the thought of this nearness. Just then the clouds blushed too—a rosy pink—for the sun was setting and giving them his last caress. Another day was passed. The life of her maidenhood was nearly ended. A new world was about to open before her. Oh! what a glorious world, all glowing with the ardor of self-devotion, all gleaming with the brightness of her master's love. Surely there had been a loneliness in the maiden days, albeit sweet as those of the violet in the shade; but the days to



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come were those of the rose, opening its petals gladly and freely to the full sunlight. Saskia blushed to own the thought, but it was a true one. Life without Rembrandt now would mean nothing to her. Nor did her lover's passion lag behind hers.

As she sat there in the sunset light looking toward the skies, so sat he in the busy studio, now quiet when work was done and all but he had gone. Palette and brushes dropped from his hand. There was a great light that came, even thus late, through the north window—a glorious light. He rose and looked out. The gables and the spires of the city all about were brilliant as the last sun-rays touched them. This brightness over the homes of toil and the homes of worship seemed to the artist a benediction upon the lives he loved and painted, but this evening it seemed much more than that—it was the radiance of a sun that should rise again to lighten, glorify, and fill with beauty his own life.

Rembrandt was quite alone in the great studio. Even the boy Jan had taken the colors elsewhere, that he might grind them without disturbing the master. Like a faithful dog this little Dutchman knew his master's moods, and at this moment well he knew there was a mood upon that master that would brook no disturbance.

"The time is at hand," thought Rembrandt. "To-morrow go I hence to Bildt where the fullness of my life's joy will come to me. She is waiting for me. Oh! Saskia! my beloved! would that I had wings, then would I be at thy side.

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But I must see that all is ready for the wedding. Why is it that I hear naught from Albrecht. Perhaps a letter may have come. It is most strange. I wonder what has befallen him."

It was strange indeed that no word had come from his friend, but Rembrandt had been so absorbed in his work and his dreams that he had not thought of anything else. He left the window where he had stood so long and called Jan.

"Is there no letter for me from Herr Albrecht? I had expected to hear from him ere now."

"Yea, master, a letter you said. Yea, I think it is a letter. It came but now, master, and I did not dare disturb you. Yea, it is a letter, I think. Here it is, master."

"Who brought this letter?"

"It was a man, master, and I think he was on a horse. Yea, there was a horse. I saw him when I opened the door, and, master, the man ran away. Perhaps he got on the horse, I saw not, for I shut the door, master, I did, for I feared the man, master, I did."

"You are always afraid of something. Why did you not keep the man and let me speak with him, you varlet?"

"But he would not stay, master. He ran away, indeed he did, master, and I couldn't stop him, could I, master? I am not big enough."

"Yes, I see," said Rembrandt. "Go now, I would read this letter."

It was a letter from Albrecht, a letter hurriedly written. A party of freebooters had surrounded Egmont. They were bent on plunder, but the

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Dutch had armed themselves and were making a good fight against them. Soon they would be killed or dispersed, but meanwhile, Albrecht had to stay with the sick Hildebrand, whom he had found, and it was not possible for him to come to Bildt for the wedding. Albrecht had feared he might not be able to send the letter in time, but had found a trusty messenger who had agreed to deliver it, even at the peril of his life.

"I am sorry, very sorry," thought Rembrandt. "I love this German, and I know he loves me. Scarce know why I love him so much. He is not great, I think, yet do I believe there is more in him than has yet come to light; but we do not love men because they are great. We love them because—because—well, why do we love them? Nay, I know not. I love not many, and there are few who love me; yet Albrecht I do love, and sorry I am that he is in trouble, and that he cannot be with me on my day of days. Let me look at the letter again. No, he is not in danger. It is a trifling matter. The Dutch will soon disperse them. Yes, I see, then there is no need of my help. He asks for naught. I will not, then, think more of it, but will let the heaven of my joy be unclouded, and at break of day hence go I to Bildt."

The next morning Rembrandt left Amsterdam alone. He needed no company but his joyful thoughts. The journey to the little Friesland town was soon over, and the arrangements for the simple wedding were easily made.

Now dawned the day of June, the twenty-sec-

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ond, in the year sixteen hundred and thirty-four—the wedding-day of Rembrandt and Saskia. Unclouded was the sky when the sun rose, but afterward the white clouds floated up into the blue. Quite early in the morning Rembrandt went to the house of Gerritt van Loo, where Saskia awaited him. She was all in white, and her bridal veil half hid her face. He wore the garb of a Dutch patrician, rich black velvet, and there was a heavy gold chain about his neck from which hung his seal. Proud and noble was his bearing. He would have seemed to others then, as he always seemed to Saskia, a prince among men. Scarcely did Saskia dare look upon him. Only once did her tender eyes seek his, then she bent her head, and would not look up again. They went to the little town-hall, and there inscribed their names upon the registry. Then came the service in the church. It was the parish church, a little one with high-backed pews of yellow wood, and in the windows many coats of arms of brilliant color and curious design. There was a high pulpit, not ornamented with carving, but made of a dark red wood that came from the Indies. In this stood Rudolpe Hermanz Luinga, the pastor, awaiting the coming of the bridal pair. Gerritt van Loo and Saskia came with them, and there were a few of the family and friends—not many, for because of Antje's death only the nearest and dearest had been bidden.

Rembrandt and Saskia walked together toward the pulpit, and then stood in front of it, she with

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bent head and all enveloped in her veil, he with uplifted brow and flashing eyes, yet with an unwonted softness in his face, as though in spite of all his pride he would reverently greet the angel of blessing and love who had come into his life. The wedding-service was simple, and was concluded by a few words in which the good pastor asked God's blessing on these who, strong and confident in mutual love, were entering upon a new state of life, and also gently warned them that new responsibilities as well as new joys awaited them. He prayed that they might be as faithful to duty as to their mutual love, and that their lives together might serve God's glory, and be of use to their fellow-men. Then, with a very tender voice, he thanked God for the love that had brought these hearts together, and pronounced Rembrandt and Saskia husband and wife.

After this quiet but beautiful service there was a gathering of the family and friends at Gerritt van Loo's house, where was good cheer and warm welcome for the guests. There was merry-making, and many toasts were drunk from the great beakers of Rhine wine to the health of the bride and groom and their happiness and prosperity. Rembrandt's pride and haughtiness of manner quite left him at this genial time, and he seemed as sunny and mellow as the light of his own most glowing canvas. Saskia was still shy and said not much; but her eyes were glad, and bewitching smiles greeted those who came to say pleasant words to her—such smiles as only came to the lips of this merry maiden, now a wife.

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Toward evening these happy ones sat together on the deck of the barge that was to take them to Amsterdam.

"I take thee to our home, beloved. Long have I been making it ready for thee; I trust thou wilt find it to thy liking. There has been a wondrous joy in seeking to make it beautiful for thee, but nothing was good enough for my Saskia. It is the blessedness of her love that will glorify the house; I scarce remember with what I have adorned it, for well I knew it was only thy presence that could give it the beauty that must be in Saskia's home."

"Rembrandt, my master, thou art too fond, yet would I not have thee changed. Thy Saskia will do what she can to make the home happy for thee. There will be great ones coming there, paying homage to thy genius; and sometimes I fear that thy laughing Saskia may seem to them an unfit mate for so great a man, but I will do my best. Even great people do not want to be always grave, do they, my own? They will not be offended if Saskia laughs sometimes."

"Nay, Saskia, there lives not one who would not be gladdened by one of thy sweet smiles, but methinks there should be more of them for me this day. Thou hast been pensive. Fear nothing, my beloved. Let gladness have its way, for well I know thine heart rejoices even as does mine own."

"That is true, and if I have not smiled enough, it is only because of the depth of my joy. Forgive me, if there is aught amiss."

"There is naught to forgive. I did not mean

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to chide thee, but only to tell thee, what well thou knowest already, how thy smiles are my sunshine and in them will my life rejoice always."

The sun set in a glory that irradiated the earth and the heavens, and the full moon rose and made of the canal a pathway of gold for these lovers.

Hushed by the beauty about them and the deep tenderness within their hearts, they sat there long in silence, in the great peace of the night.

CHAPTER XXV

Coming to the Home

AT last the leisurely barge brought Rembrandt and his bride to the great city where they were to dwell together. They went at once to the house in the Breedestraat, which was all in readiness for their occupancy. In the very vestibule Saskia's eyes were delighted, for there were Spanish chairs, upholstered with Russian leather, and the floor was of the fir-wood that came from Norway, rich in color and fine in grain, though not so deep in tone as the woods of the Indies. There were pictures in the vestibule. Even at the entrance art greeted all who came. Two of these pictures were by Rembrandt himself—one a combat of lions, the other a mother and child, a most singular contrast of subjects to be found at the artist's own threshold. There was a country scene by Seghers, and there was a marine by Antoniss. All this in the vestibule! Saskia stopped and trembled.

"Rembrandt! my own Rembrandt! what hast thou done? Didst thou think Saskia wanted a palace? Surely it is a palace that I see."

"Dearest, be not foolish. This is no palace. I have but put about a few pictures and prints, and you would not have had me leave the house

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without fit furniture for the sweetest bride that ever crossed the threshold of any home. It is naught, save this, I did what I could without thy help to make ready for thee. Now that thou art here, together will we get such things as are lacking, and by and by the home may grow more worthy of its mistress. That it is not now, but she will make it so."

"Oh, my own dear lord, far too much hast thou done for me already!"

"Sayest thou so in the vestibule? Nay! come hither. There is something better than this, but nothing fit for thee."

Rembrandt led the way to the parlor. This was at the front of the house. It was not a very large room, but it was wainscoted and raftered as was the custom. Here were chairs of the Spanish oak, most richly carved, and upholstered with green velvet. In the middle of the room was a great table of black walnut, a wood commonly used in Venice at that time for rich furniture. This, too, was ornamented, perhaps even too much, with elaborate carving. Over the middle part of it was spread a cloth from Tournay, which seemed almost like a tapestry. The groundwork was a rich red, and there was much foliage embroidered upon it in different shades of green. Saskia stopped, entranced, as the exquisite combination of color met her eye; but in another moment she looked at the walls, on which were hung pictures by men so great that even in that day their works were rare and very costly. There was a marvellous head by Raphael—a portrait vying in power even

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with that of Julius the pope. There was a series of Bible scenes, all by famous painters—Palma Vecchio, Jan Lievens, who was Rembrandt's friend, and Brouwer, famous in Antwerp and also in Amsterdam, where he had dwelt for a time in the year before Rembrandt came to live there. All of these pictures were gems. Saskia was no novice in art, and her eyes sparkled as she looked from one masterpiece to another. But Rembrandt would not let her linger long here.

"Come into this room behind, dear Saskia. Here will our table be spread, and here in the evening will I again and again draw and etch the dearest, loveliest, winsomest face in all the world."

"Oh! dear master, but it is beautiful here, so beautiful! so beautiful! Why hast thou done all this? Oh! what a home! but it needed not such splendor when thou wert to be in it."

"But I wonder those sweet eyes have not found my Rubens. See you it not hanging there in the full light? Ah! it is a little behind you! that is why you saw it not at the first. Oh! Saskia! that is the masterpiece. Look what color, what a glow! what radiance! nor is there a fault in the drawing—well know I that."

"Oh! Rembrandt! what a wondrous picture! Indeed, I knew that there were pictures by the great Fleming to be had here in Amsterdam, but surely Hendrik never had one that equalled that."

"No, dearest! no, he never did. I chanced upon this through the kindness of a friend of mine,

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an excellent man, one Lazarus, a Jew who lives close to us here."

"A Jew, saidst thou, an excellent man! And are we to live near the Jews, dearest Rembrandt?"

"Yes, indeed, this house is on the outskirts of their quarter. They are a fine people, and I know no more interesting models in Amsterdam. Many and many a one have I drawn and etched and painted. I think of trying my hand on my friend Lazarus very soon."

"Oh, Rembrandt, why do you draw and paint Jews? I am afraid I like them not over well. Dearest, tell me, are they good and true to you? Are you sure? Oh! tell me! Please, tell me!"

"Saskia, my own darling, what ailest thee? Why will thou let there be any shadow at all on our home-coming?"

"I know not, dearest, if it be a shadow. Truly my heart was full of joy, overflowing, when I saw all that thou hadst done for me; but it is true I shuddered when thou didst speak of this Lazarus, and indeed I know not why. Can one so young as I always tell why she shudders? It is likely there is no reason for it. Think of it no more, my own dear lord and master. Surely there can be no reason for it."

"Thou art right. There is no reason. This Lazarus has been of great help to me. Without his aid thy home would not be what it is. But, Saskia, I have something to ask of thee. Truly thou art so beautiful here in this room, where we are to be together in the evenings of the joyful life now open before us, that I would make an

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etching of thee, not as thou standest there, but lean thine arm upon the table. Take not off the hat. It becomes thee well. Sit there in the great Spanish chair, and look at me as thou wilt look, God willing, each evening in the coming years."

"Rembrandt, Rembrandt, thou hast already painted me often. Why wilt thou do it again?"

"I have said, dearest. It is because thou art so beautiful, and because I would have mine own picture of thee at the time of the coming to the home which thy life already blesses."

"Be it as thou wilt," said Saskia, and she sat at the table as Rembrandt wished. In a time that seemed marvellously short, there was so faithful a likeness of this beautiful bride that Saskia started back in wonder.

"Again hast thou succeeded, for I know it is perfect. How couldst thou do that? There is none other that could. Thou art the greatest of painters, and surely the greatest of etchers. Let me see it again. Ah! yes, and this was meant to be in remembrance of our wedding-time."

"Truly was it, my beloved! and also does it tell that often thy sweet face shall illuminate etchings, and canvasses too, far larger than this. Never was artist blessed with so winsome a model. I thank thee, dearest, and now we will see what else the house has to offer thee for thy comfort and thy happiness. I am glad I made the etching before I showed thee all, for in the home, beloved, art must be first in our thoughts, because, because—Oh! why? Why should it be? Yes, it must be, for art is supreme. I meant not that art came

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before thee in my love. Thou knowest that is not true, but art has so much to do for the world. Oh, darling! thou wilt help me. I know it. Perhaps thy Rembrandt may tell to those in other ages, long after our own, something about these heroes that live about us now, something of the loveliness of these Dutch maidens who have made our land great by the inspiration of their love in the hearts of these heroes who have fought by sea and by land. Nay, but, my dear lady, I talk too much. Perchance I feel too deeply the spell of thine own inspiration. It must be so, for but now I said I would show thee the rooms that as yet thou hast not seen. Come hither, beloved. Here is the room in which thou shalt repose; and God will, I know, ever give thee sweet dreams, for of naught that was not sweet couldst thou dream. See, this room is all in blue and white! Didst thou not tell me that on the eve of our wedding the sky was tenderly blue, the clouds dazzlingly white? The dream was a prophecy. Look! here are the colors of which thou didst speak."

"Rembrandt, Rembrandt, my own, wert thou with me in thought on that evening when I looked through Hiskia's window? Truly do I think thou wert there. We were not far apart. It is not far from Bildt to Amsterdam, but that is not what I meant. I think thou knowest what I mean, but I will not tell thee if thou dost not know. Thy Saskia and thee far apart! Would that be possible, master mine? Nay, but catch me now. We will be far apart unless thou dost catch me, for I

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am going to run away, and you must find me if you can."

Saskia did as she had said. With quick movement she eluded Rembrandt's arms, and, running from the room, found, just as she crossed the threshold, a stairway leading upward. Up this she bounded. There was a little light above which guided her, but when she came to the top of the stair she was bewildered. There was only one light in the great space, but that served to show that many rooms were here, nor were they joined one to another. Saskia, quite surprised at a thing so very unusual in a Dutch home, hid herself in one of these little rooms and, in so doing, overturned an easel which in falling made a great crash. Rembrandt, who had followed, laughed aloud. "And so, darling, will you thus intrude upon my art school on this first night in our home? Never mind, I have caught thee now, my sweet bird, and well I wot thou art surprised. I had told thee naught of this upper part where the pupils work, but if thou wouldst have waited thou shouldst have known without all this knocking about of easels. Come, now, thou hast seen enough of thine own home for one evening. It is time to rest, for surely thou must be weary."

CHAPTER XXVI

Lazarus and Isaac

L AZARUS sat at his front window looking toward the home of Rembrandt. He could see well the window of that room which Rembrandt but a little while before had shown to his bride—the room where hung the beautiful pictures bought, alas! with money furnished by the Jew.

“My God! My God! What fools are these Christians. Why, that man brings his bride here. He tells her nothing, I wager my life, about the way he got all those fine things there. No! no! Lazarus knows. He told her nothing at all—not one word. That is just like him, just like them all—the fools! the fools! Now what is next to do? I must think a little. There is now much money here in this enterprise. Perhaps it would be better if I see Isaac, and have with him another talk.”

The Jew donned his gabardine, and started at once for the home of his friend Isaac, which was not far off. Isaac was at home at the moment of Lazarus's coming. He was busy counting over a sum of money he had just received, before he took it up to the chest in the attic which contained his treasures. So absorbed was he in this delightful

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occupation that he had hardly time to sweep the yellow coins back into the leather bag from which he had just taken them, and which usually hung from his girdle. He had not time to attach it in its proper place, but held it in his left hand, covered by a fold of his robe. Thus encumbered, he rose, somewhat awkwardly, to greet his friend. Lazarus noticed his slight embarrassment, as he noticed everything, but at the moment did not divine the cause; and after the usual greetings, they sat down by the table, where Isaac was more at his ease, for he could better conceal the bag.

"I am most glad to see you, friend Lazarus, and I hope that all goes well with our business with that painter fellow."

"Yes, that goes fairly well, friend Isaac. Have you not heard that he is married, and has brought his lovely bride to the house that I did buy for him?"

"Well, no! I did not know that. Have you been there, Lazarus?"

"No, I have not been there, but I can see the house from my window, and I saw them there together in the front room. He was showing her the pictures that I got for him."

"Friend Lazarus! Has he paid nothing yet for those fine things?"

"That I did not say, Isaac. Oh! yes, he has paid something, but it is not much. There was much interest, you know, and I charge that up."

"Well! what per cent. do you charge him, Lazarus?"

"Well, I don't know. That painter he was so

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careless, he never asked me for one statement, and I believe he knows not at all how much he gave me; but when I count that money I will tell you. You will get big interest, Isaac, but we must wait a long time yet. Meanwhile that painter he will pay much, but he will not pay enough, and we will keep what he pays for the interest."

"What you mean is, you keep it, Lazarus. Not one florin do I get. What are you doing with that money?"

"Isaac, you are a great big fool. We must take all that he pays, and make him buy more fine things; then he will get in deeper and deeper, and by and by you and I will sell out all he has. Give me five hundred florins, and I will add to that what he has paid, and then I will buy one other grand painting that I know, and I will sell it to him."

"Where do you think I have got so much money? I am poor now, Lazarus, so help me Abraham! There is not one gold piece in this house."

"Isaac, you are my friend, and I will make much money for you, and that you know very well, but you must not tell me lies. What for do you do that? Will you not let me make you rich? Well I know you have the money now in your purse."

This was merely a happy guess on the part of Lazarus, but he was accustomed to good fortune in such matters. It seemed a sort of second nature with him to find gold. Isaac started so violently at the unexpected words, seemingly showing

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such knowledge of what was beneath his robe, that the heavy bag eluded the clutch of his left hand and fell, with a loud clinking sound, full on the floor. It was manifestly impossible to attempt further concealment as to the presence of money. Now, poor Isaac was in mortal terror lest Lazarus should find out just how much there was in the bag. It was indeed a goodly sum, and well did Isaac know that Lazarus would make some clever pretext for getting it all if he could. Isaac knew perfectly well that he would make an enormous interest on his money from this scheme that Lazarus had devised, but he had more of the real miser's instinct than had Lazarus. It was like tearing body and soul asunder for him to part with his treasure, even for such a laudable and hopeful undertaking as this. Moreover, he had not implicit trust in his friend. True, he had protected himself by such written agreements that he knew he could not lose even the exorbitant interest which had been agreed upon, for Lazarus was perfectly good for sums far greater than any which Isaac had advanced. Nevertheless he was obliged to trust the management of the affair to his friend; and it was possible, as Isaac well knew from personal experience, for some money to stick to the fingers as it was passed by the hand.

His wretchedness was only too plainly portrayed on his face; but Lazarus, with his accustomed shrewdness, forbore to take advantage of Isaac's unfortunate predicament. He preferred to retain his friend's confidence, because in the end he would gain more by such a course.

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“Well, Isaac, my friend, that money that I heard drop must have come straight from heaven, since you did not know it was there. Now, pick you that up and go you to your desk in that other room, and you count out for me what I wanted, and you write out another agreement that you get fifty per cent. interest, and I will sign the paper.”

Isaac, greatly relieved, picked up the purse, put it again in a fold of his robe, that Lazarus might not see its size, though he half-feared his sharp-eyed friend could see through robe and purse too and count all the coins. Therefore he went in haste to the other room, where he did exactly what Lazarus had requested.

“That is all right, Isaac. This matter goes on well. We need some patience, but we can wait when the reward is sure.”

“That is true, Lazarus. Well I know that all is right that you do; but do not wait too long, Lazarus, for I would have my money and the interest as soon as possible.”

“I will do my best, but you must leave the time of payment to me. You have good security.”

“I know that, I know that, but the waiting is hard.”

Thus muttered Isaac as Lazarus placed the money in his purse and folded his gabardine over him as he rose to go.

And so thickened the plot. The skill, patience, and wealth of the Jews were pitted against the carelessness, prodigality, and demand for gratifi-

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cation of the æsthetic taste of the artist. In such a struggle there could be but one issue, while the characters and powers of the parties involved remained as they were at that time.

CHAPTER XXVII

Albrecht Comes to the Castle

ALBRECHT reached Egmont after an uneventful journey. He was strangely interested in this quest. Naturally warm-hearted and affectionate, he had been deeply touched by the forlorn condition of his fellow-countryman, and most sincerely wished to help him; but there was another cause for his intense interest, and that was the mystery that surrounded the whole matter. He could not help connecting in his thought the sick man he was seeking with the beautiful woman he had so long sought in vain, yet there seemed no reason for such a connection excepting that both were Germans. After all, that was not a very bad reason, for there were not a great many Germans in Holland at that time. Albrecht was all eagerness, and could hardly stop long enough at the little inn to make his inquiries as to the location of the cottage where Hildebrand was supposed to be. It was not difficult to find the cottage. It was about a mile from the inn, and just behind the great sand-dunes that rose here along the North Sea and, extending several miles, formed a natural protection against the inroads of the waters. Albrecht asked the good Dutch wife

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who came to the door in answer to his knock whether the sick Hildebrand was there.

"No, mynheer, he is not here now. He was here, but one day Count Maurice, who has a great castle not far off, came here to buy some cheeses. He often does that, mynheer, for he likes them, and they are very good. Perhaps mynheer would like to taste one of them?"

"Not now, my good woman. I thank you, but I am somewhat in haste; and what said you this Count Maurice did?"

"Why, mynheer, he found there was a young German gentleman here, and he was very sick. Now the Count, he loves Germans. I don't know why, except, perhaps, because he has often been in Germany. Anyway he took a fancy to the young man, and nothing would do but he must take him to his own castle. He was just as well off here, indeed he was, and I was doing all I could for him, because I love Dr. Tulp; and, besides, the young man is a good young man, and kindly, and I would go much out of my way to serve him, for, indeed, he is lovable; but the Count would have his will. He is headstrong, and there is no gainsaying him."

"Enough, my good woman," said Albrecht, who had long been vainly trying to get in a word. "Where is this castle? I must go there at once."

"Indeed, sir, it is not hard to find. You go back to the inn and take the road that goes north, and follow it a mile, or it may be two, but ye'll know the place when ye see it. There are great gables on it, and a big tower with a point to it in the

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corner, and there's a moat that goes all about it."

"Thanks, heartily, my good woman. . I must go at once."

It was not difficult to find Count Maurice's castle, but it was a long walk, and night was coming on as Albrecht reached the place. He made known his errand to the warden, and there was no difficulty about his admission. Count Maurice, hearing that his visitor was a German, welcomed him gladly, and led him directly to the sick man's chamber. The young man was recovering. The fever had left him; but there was the great weakness and utter lassitude that naturally follow a severe attack of malarial fever. Nevertheless, the invigorating breath of the ocean was daily giving him more and more strength, as the wise Dr. Tulp had predicted, and it would not be long now before he would be a well man again. The moment Albrecht looked on Hildebrand's face he started, yet he could hardly have told why. There seemed something familiar about it, and yet he was sure he never had seen this young man before. The truth is that for a moment Albrecht thought he was so like the cavalier whom he had seen in the streets of Amsterdam that he might have been his brother. Albrecht was a keen observer of faces, and it was this very characteristic that had gotten him into his difficulties of late. However, he attached little importance to this resemblance, and tried to dismiss it from his mind. There were few words said at first. Hildebrand was not yet strong enough to talk

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much, but he seemed grateful that his fellow-countryman had come so far to give help to one in trouble. Such was also the thought of Count Maurice. "My young friend," he said to Albrecht, "one does not often see such utterly unselfish devotion in these cruel days. You say you never saw this young man before?"

"Never."

"And you came to take care of him simply because he is a German, and you are a German. Well, well, that is strange."

"Yes, I suppose I came for that reason; but no matter, I am glad I am here."

Hildebrand had again begun to doze because of his languor, and he had not heard these words spoken by the Count and Albrecht.

"Now that you are here," said the Count, "I suppose you must be installed as chief nurse in charge of the patient."

"That is what I wish, yet I am embarrassed, for I fear I trespass on your kindness. You have already one German under your roof, and now another comes. Surely hospitality could go no farther."

"Speak not of it, Herr von Stoltzing. If only some of those miserable Spanish freebooters, who have often threatened me, do not attack my house, there could be naught but pleasure in entertaining you both. I must, however, confess I fear such an attack, but I will tell you more of that later. Let us now go to rest—you in Hildebrand's chamber—I in my own, which is within call."

"Good-night, most courteous host," said Albrecht. "Sleep well."

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“And you also, Herr von Stoltzing.”

There had been of late years many attempts of Spanish privateers to harass Dutch commerce, and even to land upon the coast and seize what booty they could. Count Maurice's castle, being so near the sea and in a lonely situation, was a particularly tempting prize for these buccaneers. Several attempts to sack it had already been made, but constant watchfulness and the quick assistance of Dutch burgher soldiers from Alkmaar and Egmont had hitherto warded off such attacks. Nevertheless, if some unusually strong body of privateers should effect a landing on the great beach of Egmont an Zee, and surmount the dunes at some unprotected place, the count's castle might have to stand a siege; though it would probably be a short one, for relief would be sure to come before very long. Nevertheless, there would be danger in a bold dash from such a force of Spaniards, for sometimes they were very quick with their deadly work. Of this the Count was well aware, and his preparations for defense were as well made as possible under the circumstances. His castle was not strongly fortified, but it was capable of making some resistance, for it was surrounded by a moat, and there were a few culverins mounted upon a low wall that was between the moat and the castle and made an outer defense, which would have to be surmounted before the main building could be reached. If there had been a strong force of soldiers within it would not have been easy to take the place by any sudden attack. A siege would have been necessary; but,

unfortunately, the Count's retainers were few. He had been impoverished in the long wars and could no longer sustain an army of armed followers, as his ancestors had done.

It was not long after Albrecht's arrival before exactly what the Count had foreseen happened. An unusually strong force of Spanish privateers made a landing on the great beach, not far from Egmont, at a point where the dunes happened for the moment to be unguarded. Unresisted, therefore, they rushed to the top of the sand-hills, whence they saw the Count's castle, which was not far off. They had been fortunate enough to land just opposite to it. They swooped down at once, hoping to surprise the place; but the Count's servants were watchful and quick of eye. They had seen the steel caps of the Spaniards flash in the sunlight as they stood on the top of the dunes, and, at once suspecting danger, had made every preparation for defense they could in so short a time, and had sent messengers to Alkmaar and Egmont to ask help. The Spaniards make a quick rush, hoping to carry the place at the first assault. They had not expected the fire of the culverins, for it was not generally known that the Count had thus fortified his place. The first volley, delivered at point blank range, was deadly in effect, and broke the ranks of the advancing column. The Spaniards wavered, hesitated, then fell back to the shelter of the woods, which here were very thick between the dunes and the high-road leading north from Egmont. This forest was a part of the domain of the Counts of Holland,

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and had been used as a royal hunting ground. Once within its shelter the Spaniards rallied, and the leaders took counsel. There had been no pursuit. Clearly, then, the force within was not a strong one. There were no signs of any help from without. Their ship was within easy reach, and they could retreat to it if need be. They resolved to surround the place and cut off all access to it, until they could get a heavy gun from the ship and destroy the walls on which the culverins were mounted. It was a bold scheme; but the force was a strong one, and such daring actions were not uncommon in those days. Quite often they were successful. This was accordingly done, and the Count's castle was besieged. That is, it was surrounded by a force sufficiently strong to prevent egress or access. The Spaniards for the time made little hostile demonstration, except some arquebus firing, which was designed to keep the defenders behind their walls, and perhaps pick off one or two of them, if they were incautious.

"I wonder what these rascals are about," said the Count to Albrecht. "Methinks there is something sinister and of bad omen in their waiting thus without striking another blow. They must be expecting help of some kind. Perhaps they may have a heavy gun within reach, with which they can make a breach in the wall and dismount the culverins. Ah! that is it, I am sure. Their pirate ship cannot be far off."

"I think you must be correct," said Albrecht, "though I know but little of such matters. In

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truth, Count Maurice, my life has been turned topsy-turvy ever since I have been in this country of yours. I am naturally a lover of peace and quiet, and very fond of what is artistic, and indeed of all beauty; yet in Amsterdam I have been involved in adventures of a most curious kind that have kept me in a turmoil all the time. And now it seems most likely I must become a soldier—something even more foreign to my habit than the adventures of which I just spoke. Yet needs must I help in the defense of your walls. Give me a sword and a steel cap, and I will do the best I may, though I fear that will not be much.”

“You are most kind, Herr von Stoltzing, and I am willing to wager a goodly sum on your value, albeit you talk so much in self-dispraise. I must accept your offer, for we need all the help we can get just now; nor can I tell how soon relief will come from Alkmaar or Egmont. The burghers mean well. They will come, but they are sometimes rather slow; while the Spaniard, on the other hand, is quick as a swooping hawk.”

Albrecht went with the Count to the dining-hall, which was also the armory, and he was soon equipped with the necessary weapons, offensive and defensive. Really he was more skilled in the use of them than he cared to admit, for war was not to his liking, nor would he take part in it except on compulsion; but in those days there were few indeed who had not been forced to fight at times, and all the youth were trained to the exercise of arms.

They had not long to wait before action became

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necessary, for the watchman on the turret saw the Spaniards dragging a large cannon over the dunes. It was a piece quite powerful enough to demolish their low wall, but it was not easy to drag it through the woods and get it within range. This difficulty made considerable delay; and finally the piece stuck fast in a low boggy place and resisted all efforts to move it. The ground all about it was soft, and the men, slipping about in the bog, could not pull with much force. It was clear that the Spaniards were much discomfited by this. Delay was not at all to their liking, for they might be attacked at any moment; but they did not want to give up their cannon, even if they had to retreat, and therefore they resolved to keep the place invested, as there was no sign of approaching relief, and sent to the ship for ropes and pulleys with which they could extricate the piece, which was slowly sinking farther and farther into the bog. Nature had often fought for the Dutch in ways similar to this.

“Ha! ha! Herr von Stoltzing, see you that?” said the Count. “Those villains are balked by the water and the mud—the good angels of Holland! I should not wonder if the land itself could capture the cannon without any help from us. There’s a deep hole there, and by good luck the fellows have found the very middle of it. But they do not raise the siege, nor will they until they are attacked from without, but they may try another assault. The culverins are awaiting them, however, and surely now it can’t be long before our brave burghers come. I understand

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not why they are not here already. Can you see any sign of them?"

"Not I, Count. I have been looking in every direction from the tower-top, and my eyes are of the keenest, yet naught did I see save a small party of riders—three I think, and two of them women. They came from the Egmont side, but turned and rode back at the top of their speed as soon as they saw the Spaniards."

"I wonder who they might be? But if they went back toward Egmont they will give the alarm there, if for some reason my own messenger has failed to do so. He may have met with some accident. Indeed, I believe this must be true, for otherwise those riders you saw, if, indeed, they came through Egmont, would surely there have been warned against approaching my castle. Methinks I must send another messenger. I have one man skilful enough, I think, to elude the Spaniards at night and bear me a message to Egmont."

"If, indeed, you seriously think of making this attempt, my lord Count, will you let the messenger take a letter from me to my friend Rembrandt in Amsterdam? I am greatly troubled because I promised him that I would be with him at his wedding, which is not far off, and he will not know what has become of me."

"Surely, surely, Herr von Stoltzing, the messenger can take your letter as far as Egmont, and there find another who will take it to Amsterdam. I would not have him go farther than Egmont himself, because I wish him to stay there until the burghers are arrived, and then lead them back

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hither ; for he knows all the by-ways, and has been where the Spaniards are posted, therefore he will be able to show the burghers how best to fall upon these rascals and put them to flight."

"Most certainly that will do as well, and I thank you heartily for letting the messenger do this for me in this time of peril. I would make the attempt myself, but I dare not leave Hildebrand in such a plight."

"Nay, my friend, you know not the country well enough, even if it were possible for you to leave. The messenger can as well carry two letters as one. Go you and write your letter with all speed, and I will prepare mine."

The two letters were soon ready. Count Maurice selected for this dangerous errand a Dutch soldier who had long been in his service. It would be possible at night to swim the moat, and reach a point on the opposite bank where there was a small but dense thicket of low bushes. This once gained, it would not be so hard to crawl through the thicket ; and if there were no Spaniards on the other side of it, the rest would be easy. It happened to be a very dark night and, thus favored, the soldier successfully accomplished his mission, though he passed so near the Spaniards that if he had made the least noise in crawling through the bushes he would surely have been discovered.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Hildegarde in Armor

IT had not been easy for Hildegarde to determine what next to do. Her last adventure and the perplexities which necessarily arose from it had quite unnerved her, brave as she was; but it was only for a time. After the needed refreshment and rest had produced their due effect she was quite herself again, and lost not a moment in making her plans to go to her cousin, whose protection here in Holland she now felt to be absolutely necessary. No matter if he were ill she must join him, because the mere presence of a man of her own family would justify her position and prevent misconstruction of her actions.

"Yes, I must go to him at once," she said to herself. "True, the German is there, but I care not. I do not know him. Why should I think about him? He is nothing to me. But I cannot go in my disguise, for I might be discovered, and that would never, never do. Oh! no! no! no!—a thousand times no! We will go by the canal to Alkmaar, as Govert Flinck told me, and there will we get horses and go to Egmont. It is easy. Courage, Hildegarde! Why should your heart beat, and your nerves tremble about so simple a thing? Why, it is nothing."

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Thus half-thinking, half-talking to herself, this bold and beautiful maiden sought again her womanly attire, and then she called her servants.

"Wilhelm, Marjorie, come hither. I have something to be done at once." The two were not far off, and appeared together in answer to her call.

"What is 't, my lady? Wilhelm is here. Wilhelm will do as you wish."

"Oh! eh! ah, my lady, and so will poor Marjorie! but may God deliver us from such an awful time as we had when we came here! I was a'most a'frighted out of my senses."

"Peace, Marjorie," said Hildegarde. "You were not hurt, nor were any of us. This is not nearly so serious a matter; but we must make haste. Wilhelm! get places for the three of us on the next barge that goes hence to Alkmaar. Marjorie, pack my mails, your own, and Wilhelm's. Meanwhile I will to the Jew diamond-broker and get my money on the gem he valued but a short time ago, though really now it seems an age. Make haste, and let all be ready when I return."

All was done as Hildegarde had ordered and the three went on their way—Marjorie trembling and frightened, but silent, for she stood in awe of her mistress; Wilhelm stolid, dogged, but with his German loyalty fully aroused, ready to nerve him for the protection of his lady if help were needed; Hildegarde herself with that proud and noble bearing which always distinguished her, but never so brightly as in times of difficulty and perhaps danger. They came at last to the Egmont inn on the horses they had taken at Alkmaar, and,

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alighting there, inquired, as Albrecht had done, for the cottage where Hildebrand was staying. At last they were directed to the castle, and again mounting their horses proceeded thither. No alarm had been given at Egmont, for the Count's messenger had been intercepted by the Spaniards, whose advance had been quicker than Count Maurice had supposed. The messenger rode straight into a party of them, who were occupying the road from the castle to Egmont, and was taken prisoner directly. Thus the Spaniards knew they had nothing to fear from an attack of the burghers on that side—at least for a time. On the side of Alkmaar the messenger had been successful in accomplishing his mission, though he had narrowly escaped, and had been obliged to take a very roundabout way and conceal himself for a time in the woods, all of which had much delayed him.

Hildegarde and her escort rode onward without fear and were soon nearing the Count's castle. The faithful Wilhelm rode ahead. Marjorie stayed close by her mistress's side, a little behind him. Suddenly at a turn of the road the castle was seen, and at the same moment the line of Spanish soldiers about it. Wilhelm turned at once, crying, "My lady, my lady, go back. Ride for your life! The Spanish are here! My God, the rascals! They are swarming about the castle! May God be praised, they have no horses. We can run. Quick! quick!"

In an instant the little party were rushing back to the inn; nor was it too soon, for they had been

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seen, and one or two shots were fired at them by the arquebusiers. These were not effective, for the little party was already out of range, nor did they check their horses until they again drew rein at the inn from which they had started for the castle.

Hildegarde was furious, for she thought the mistress of the inn had betrayed her. That worthy Dutch matron was frightened as Hildegarde poured out upon her a torrent of angry words.

“Why did you not tell me the Spaniards were here? Would you have a German noblewoman fall into the hands of those miscreants? Abominable! Seize her, Wilhelm! Nay, better call the town to arms! They will go to the rescue. I will take care of her, and see that she makes no more mischief. Haste, Wilhelm, go to the town-hall. Sound the alarm. You deceitful wretch, go within; and we will follow, and take good care that you guide no more innocent travellers into the very midst of a horde of bloody Spanish pirates.”

Hildegarde had spoken with such fiery impatience and anger that the Dutch woman had not been able to say one word. She simply stood there amazed and cowering before this outraged princess, who seemed like an offended deity, so beautiful was she in her wrath.

At last, however, the amazement and horror in the woman's face made Hildegarde pause, and the mistress of the inn found time to say, in broken words: “Spaniards! say you? Here?—near here? Where? Oh! God have mercy! Spaniards!—

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‘nay, rather devils of hell! How near?—by the castle? Oh! God help us! They will murder us or worse! Think you I knew that? God forgive you. Would I have stayed here near Spanish devils? Within! haste you within. Ha! ha! ho! ho! Pieter! Johan! make all fast. The Spaniards are here. Get the arms together in the big hall. Be quick, Bar and bolt all. They will be here anon. Oh! my God! my God! the Spaniards! Within! I say, within!”

In a few moments all had taken refuge in the inn, except Wilhelm, who had gone to give the alarm. Now Hildegarde’s impetuous spirit took full possession of her and dominated all about her. She directed everything. There were some men around the place. They must be armed at once, and go to the rescue.

Said Hildegarde, “If you Dutchmen are afraid to go and drive away the barbarous Spaniard from the Count’s castle, I will arm myself as did Joan of Arc and lead you. There is plenty of armor here.” Under such an impulse of ardor the Dutchmen forgot to be slow, and soon their steel caps were on, pikes in hand, and some found arquebuses at their homes and came to join the little band at the inn. Just then Wilhelm returned, bringing reinforcements from Egmont an Zee.

Meanwhile at the castle there had been stirring events. The Spaniards at last got their cannon out of the bog, and soon trained it on the low walls on which were mounted the culverins. The Count’s gunners did their best; but it was slow

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work to fire culverins, and the Spanish cannon was superior. The affair seemed desperate, but just at this moment the watchman on the turret descried the advancing pikes and arquebuses of the Alkmaar civic guard. He saw them coming far away across the meadows, and instantly the word of good cheer was given to the Count and the castle's defenders. The Spaniards were just about to make their final assault, which, as they believed, would carry the place. They would charge through the breach made by the big cannon.

"My lord Count," said Albrecht. "We must stop that charge. The burghers are coming; but woe to us if the Spaniards get through the breach. In a few minutes they will do their deadly work."

"You say well, Herr von Stoltzing. Said I not in the beginning you knew more of affairs of war than you would admit? What would you do then? Advise me and quickly. They will carry the place in another five minutes."

"Not so, my lord Count. I had foreseen this, and the moment the breach was made I caused the culverins from the rear to be brought into your great hall and trained through the windows upon the very breach itself. If they charge, enough will be dead men to make the rest waver, and then we can wait for our Dutch burghers."

"My German friend, I believe I owe my castle and perhaps my life to you. Direct all as you will."

It happened exactly as Albrecht had said. The Spaniards attempted a charge through the breach;

but the fire of the culverin from the window of the hall killed many, and completely disconcerted the rest. They fell back and retired to the shelter of the woods.

"Now, Count," said Albrecht, "there is time to take Hildebrand hence. See you, they have left the road to Egmont free! The Alkmaar men are coming, and you will be in no farther danger; but I fear all this turmoil of war will be too much for the poor young man, who is still far from well. Let me take him and bear him along yonder road to the inn at Egmont."

"You are right," said the Count. "I fear nothing here now. The rascals will soon be routed. The culverin is reloaded. If they charge again, they will be treated as before. Go then, and God be with you. See! they have retreated far into the woods. They will not molest you."

Directions were quickly given. The sick man was placed in a litter, and, with the help of four of the Count's servants, was borne from the castle, and under Albrecht's escort came safely at last to the inn. As Albrecht had foreseen, the Spaniards did not attempt to molest them. Indeed, their departure was not noticed, for the pirates were entirely engaged in planning another attack upon the castle, and for the time were concealed in the woods. When they came to the inn, Albrecht was greatly surprised to find it closed and the windows and doors barricaded. He thought at once that this was because of fear of the Spaniards.

"Ho, within there!" he shouted. "A friend, a

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friend, come to give help against the Spanish pirates. Entrance, I say."

The innkeeper looked cautiously through a hole in one of the window-shutters, and, seeing the German who had asked her the way to the Count's castle, she was at once reassured, and gladly opened the door. Eagerly enough Albrecht entered and the litter was borne in. "Place for this sick man," said he. "I will take him up to the large room above, where he will be out of harm's way."

"Nay, nay, sir," said the innkeeper. "There is a lady there, and I think, sir, she is arming herself."

"A lady arming herself! I do not believe it. This is another Spanish trick. I will myself go thither at once. Keep you careful watch over this sick man."

Albrecht rushed up the stairs and entered the room, for the door was not bolted. There stood Hildegarde, just putting on her armor with the help of Marjorie. Already she had on the breast-plate and the greaves, but the steel cap was still lacking. She had not found one that would fit her, and she was angry. "These stupid Dutchmen! What big heads they have." This she said to Marjorie, and then, turning, saw Albrecht at the door, mute with astonishment.

She dropped the steel cap she was about to try on, and it fell with a crash on the floor. Recovering instantly, as was her wont, from the momentary confusion of surprise, she looked on the German with the haughty dignity of an offended princess.

"Who are you, sir, that dares thus intrude upon the privacy of a lady's room? Begone, sir, at once, or I will force you to go;" and she caught up a sword.

Albrecht's native wit came to his help at this moment. "Madam, or sir, I crave your pardon. A lady's room, said you? Indeed, it scarce seems like that. Pray, forgive me. Really this armor looks little like a lady's apparel. It is not commonly so worn in Germany. Ah! but I see there are some garments yonder that might belong to a woman." He looked at the clothes which Hildegard had discarded and thrown upon the floor in her haste about donning the armor.

It was a home thrust, worse than Hildegard could have given with her sword. She dropped that weapon instantly, and, turning her back upon Albrecht, covered her face with her hands to hide her blushes.

"If you are a gentleman, sir, you will leave this room at once."

"Indeed, indeed I will, now that I know that you are a lady; but it was hard to tell—you know how hard. Why, even in Amsterdam I was deceived."

"In Amsterdam? What mean you, sir?"

"Oh! well, perhaps it would be better not to speak of it, since you chose to forbid the discussion, but I was bewildered. I thought once I saw a woman—oh! so beautiful! Then again I thought I saw a man. Doubtless I was mistaken about the man. As to the beauty of the woman I could not be mistaken. It seems to me that I see it again now."

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"If you are a man of honor, leave a defenceless woman and quit this place at once."

"Defenceless! Oh! I am not at all sure about that. Why, you just dropped a helmet and a sword, and you still have on a breastplate and greaves."

"Oh! I beg mercy. I did mean to fight, but it was for his sake—my Cousin Hildebrand's. I would do anything for him. I am a woman. I hate the very thought of fighting. Have mercy. Leave me."

"I will not leave you until I know your name. My heart has long known your face."

"You mistake me for some other, sir. I am sure you never had speech with me before."

"That may be true, fair lady, and yet I know you well. You remember St. Sebald's Church, on the day of the Meistersingers' festival?"

Hildegarde started. Indeed, she knew it well.

"You were she who gave the palm to the young German who sang the best, as Hans Sachs said. I saw you there. Tell me your name."

"It seems, sir, that you know me, and, as I am quite at your mercy, I will say that I am called Hildegarde von Lebenthal; but perhaps, sir, in the way of courtesy, it would be as well for you to tell your own name before asking that of a lady."

"I crave pardon; indeed, indeed I do. If you knew what I have sought, and how I have suffered in the search! But you know not. Forgive, then, my rudeness. My name is Albrecht von Stoltzing."

"You are, then, of the Nuremberg family. The

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singer who won the palm was of the same name."

"I am, indeed. He was my cousin."

Now it was very strange that Hildegarde seemed to have quite forgotten her embarrassment and her anger, her imperious command that Albrecht should leave the room. For the moment her curiosity had quite got the better of her; but just now she turned a little away from Albrecht, and her eyes fell upon her garments lying on the floor.

"Leave me, sir, I pray you. You have no right to be here. Go, go at once."

"Yes, I will go; but what shall I do with your Cousin Hildebrand?"

"My Cousin Hildebrand! Oh, where is he? It was he whom I was seeking. To fight for him I was arming myself. Where is he?"

"Here, in a litter, below. He has been very ill. I have been taking care of him, and I brought him hither from Count Maurice's castle, which the Spanish pirates have been besieging. I meant to bring him to this room, and that is why I intruded here."

"Thank God! thank God! He is safe then. Bring him here at once. But no, no; not yet. Wait until—oh! I beg you leave me. I will come to my cousin as soon as I can."

Albrecht this time left the room, though most reluctantly. He went down to Hildebrand and told him that his cousin was here seeking him. These were tidings of good cheer to the sick man.

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"Why does she not come at once, friend Albrecht?"

"Oh! well, she will come directly. She was not quite ready. She wanted to make a change in her toilet. Ladies are very careful about such things, you know."

"This is not a time to think about her toilet. Why, we have hardly escaped with our lives, and perhaps even now the Spaniards are after us."

"Calm yourself, she will be here anon." Indeed, Hildegarde had resumed her feminine attire in a marvellously short space of time. She was a most energetic young lady, and just now she hated the armor, and all things that men wore, with a very violent hatred.

She soon appeared and greeted her sick cousin with words of tender affection and gratitude for safety, and then she began to tell him how long she had sought him. She seemed to forget Albrecht altogether. Not once would she look at him. He was so discomfited because of her thus ignoring him that he left the room. It would have been better had he done that before, for really he should not have been present at such a meeting. Nothing but his desire to see Hildegarde again had made him forget his usual courtesy.

Just at this time Wilhelm appeared, for the armed burghers from Egmont an Zee, with whom he had been marching to the relief of the castle, were not needed, because the men of Alkmaar had already routed the Spaniards, who had fled to their ship, leaving their big cannon as a trophy

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for the Count. The way was clear, then, for a return to Amsterdam, and arrangements for the journey were soon made. It was not possible to refuse Albrecht's escort, for he had been so kind and so brave that Hildebrand already loved him ; nor did Hildegarde dare suggest that she would prefer not to have him accompany them. So they journeyed together by the road and the canal. The conduct of the young lady by the way was a mystery to everyone, probably most of all to herself. She was extremely capricious, very haughty, and kept apart from the others as much as she could. With Albrecht she would have no speech at all, if she could possibly avoid it, and the poor young man was more unhappy than before he had found her.

At Amsterdam they parted. Hildegarde took her cousin to the place where she had been lodging, and Albrecht went direct to Rembrandt's house.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Home in the Breedestraat

IT was late in the afternoon when Albrecht reached the house in the Breedestraat. Rembrandt and Saskia were just about to take their evening meal, to which Albrecht was most cordially invited as soon as the first hearty greetings had been exchanged between the friends. Then they sat down together in the carved, high-backed chairs around the great table in the dining-room. Already this house was a home. The gentle spirit of Saskia filled it, and her merry laugh made it winsome, while the lordly presence of Rembrandt dignified it. All this Albrecht felt at once, and his heart was full of joy for his friend.

“Why came you not to our wedding, Herr Albrecht?”

“But surely Rembrandt has told you why I came not.”

“Yes, yes, Albrecht. I have told her. She is but jesting with you. My Saskia loves her jest. Verily, your messenger was in great haste. Not one instant would he delay, nor left he his name, unless that rascal Jan was too stupid to remember it.”

“He stayed not, dear Rembrandt, because he thought of our danger at the castle; for, indeed,

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we were hard beset, and it seemed for a time as if the big cannon of the Spaniards would have been the death of us all. It might have been, had it not been sunk in the bog so long."

"Ah! what an exciting story! I want to hear all about it," said Saskia.

"I will tell you gladly about it, but I crave pardon just now. I would fain speak of this beautiful home, which I have never seen. What fine paintings! Where did you get them? Ah! there are some of my prints! Rembrandt! Rembrandt! much I fear me you have been extravagant."

"Tush, man, I never knew you so unmannerly. The sea-coast agrees not well with your habitual courtesy."

"True, true, I crave pardon. I believe I have lost my manners. There was cause enough. I have been so bewildered ever since I was at Egmont, and, indeed, before, that I verily believe sometimes I have lost my wits."

"But what you say is quite true," Saskia interrupted. "He is a bad, prodigal man, and he does all these things just because he is foolish about me. What shall we do with him, Herr Albrecht?"

"Indeed, madam, I think we would much better let him alone. Look how he is frowning now. Rembrandt, be not offended, I beseech you. It was because I loved you that I spoke."

"I think," said the painter, "it might, perhaps, be as well to leave these matters to me. I think myself entirely competent to attend to them, and feel perfectly able to buy as many more pictures as may suit my inclination."

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"Yes, yes, it is true," said Albrecht. "I was in the wrong. Let us forget the matter. I have my own troubles and perplexities, and they make me irritable, I think."

"What, man, have you not found her yet?"

"Found her?" said Saskia. "Is there a romance about our German friend? Tell me about it, Herr Albrecht. I love romances, and perhaps I can help you. I will if I can, because you are so true a friend to my lord Rembrandt."

"Well know I, dear lady, that you would do all you could to help me; but what there is to do I know not. It is true, I found the lady of whom Rembrandt speaks; and when I found her she was just putting on armor, that she might go and fight the Spaniards who were besieging Count Maurice's castle. She is an enigma. I understand her not at all; but she is as beautiful as an angel, though haughty as a queen."

"Albrecht, Albrecht," said Rembrandt, laughing most heartily. "Ho, ho, I have an idea. That putting on armor—well, well, ha! ha! ha! It must have been your lady-love who was here at the studio seeking her cousin! She was dressed as a man, and I wanted to paint her portrait, because I was so strongly impressed with her peculiar expression—a mingling of daring and shyness such as I had not before seen—and I wanted to paint her as a man! Ha! ha! I wonder not she was embarrassed; but I do wonder that I saw not more clearly. Truly, her disguise was a clever one, and her acting was equally good."

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“Think you so, indeed, Rembrandt? Surely it might have been. The maiden is capable of anything; but much I fear she will have no more to do with any of us since her masquerading has been discovered. Scarce would she speak to me during all the journey from Egmont hither.”

“And what would you expect?” said Saskia, with a gay laugh. “Would you think a woman discovered in such a guise would be very affable? But you are foolish to be downhearted. The very fact that she would not speak to you shows that she cares about you, and that is the main thing. Tell me the name of this fair lady. I will find her and bring her here, and you shall see her. Have no fear.”

Albrecht told where was the place of lodging to which Hildegarde had taken Hildebrand; and then, indeed, the young man did begin to take heart. There was something contagious about Saskia's cheerfulness and mirthful spirit.

Soon the little company were very happy together, talking over the many things which had happened since last they met and making plans for the future.

Rembrandt was full of his portraits, and also of the pictures, the “Descent from the Cross” and the “Raising the Cross,” which he soon afterward sold to Prince Frederic Henry, one of the sons of that William the Silent with whom Saskia's father had sat at table just before his assassination at Delft. Another question was, where Albrecht was to live. He would not leave Amsterdam so long as Hildegarde remained there.

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Now Rembrandt had given up the old studio when he had come to live with his bride in the Breestraat. Lazarus had cunningly taken the lease of that off his hands, and made money for himself by the transaction. Albrecht would not live with Rembrandt, now that he was married. They talked this matter over and over. Really, Albrecht was only staying in Amsterdam because Hildegard was there; but still he had some prints left, and perhaps Hendrik might sell them, and there might be something else to do. It so happened that Hendrik came in at that very moment.

“Ho! ho! ha! ha! how happy we are, to be sure; why, of course. Well, now, cousin, don’t be angry with me for laughing about your billing and cooing. Hendrik is old, you know, but he remembers his own youth; and, oh! Hendrik knew about all that love-making once, because he tried it.”

“I must say, Cousin Hendrik, that your jesting is somewhat abrupt,” said Saskia, pouting a little.

“Yes, yes, I dare say! I am always that way. You’ll have to forgive me, and then we’ll talk about something else. But then, you know—really, you know—you don’t want to talk about anything else. Why, of course you don’t. Ha! ha! I wish I was young again. On my soul, Cousin Rembrandt, you’ve made a palace here. No nest for a bride—oh! no, a home for a princess. Well! well! It’s all right. Oh, ho! how these pictures must pay. I wish I was a painter, and not a print-seller. There’s no money in my trade; why, one of your pictures will sell for more than I can make

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in a year. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I feel very sad sometimes, especially when the good wife is peevish; and that happens—but God forbid that I should say anything against her. Oh! she is a great woman—sleepy sometimes, but for the most part wide awake. Oh! very wide awake in watching me. Oh! she is a grand woman, and I'm a very happy man; but if I were only a painter! Oh! look at that Rubens! Why, Cousin Rembrandt, where got you that?"

"Hendrik, what ails you?" said Rembrandt. "Methinks some of that noble Rhine wine of yours has gone to your head. There's nothing here of much account. Why talk you so much about it? The Rubens? Yes, that is great. I came by that through the kindness of my friend Lazarus, a noble Jew, who lives near by."

"A Jew! a Jew! Oh, Cousin Rembrandt! Do say that is not true. You deal not with Jews. Tell me, it is not true. Alas, and alackaday! What am I good for, if I cannot sell you pictures? It is my trade, nor would I make any Jew bargains with you. Hendrik is honest, oh! yes! The Rhine wine may go to his head sometimes, but it never makes him cheat. Beware of the Jews, Cousin Rembrandt. I beseech you to trust them not. I know them well. Lazarus, you said? I know the man—one of the shrewdest, and, I think, the worst of them all."

"Now, Cousin Hendrik, I know the Rhine wine has gone to your head. This Lazarus is one of the finest men I ever met, and one of my truest friends. It would be impossible for me to tell

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you how much he has done for me, and how much he is willing to do. Few have cared for my work as he has. He understands art. He is a learned man. I think he is a great man. He wishes me to paint for him an important picture, and he has friends here about him whom he has taught to like my art. The making of my fortune is in his hands. Be careful, Hendrik, how you speak ill of one who has done so much for me."

"Is it so? Indeed! alas! alas! The Jews! the Jews! Oh! yes, fine people—learned, rich. Yes! yes! they will make your fortune, you said? Oh! truly, yes. I thought they generally made their own, but Hendrik knows not. Hendrik is blunt and stupid, and may be he has the Rhine wine in his head. Heed him not. Better so, is it not, Cousin Saskia?"

Saskia had kept silence during this talk; but her sympathies were all with Hendrik. From the first she had felt an aversion to this Lazarus whom she had never seen, but whose influence over her husband she felt and saw plainly.

"Oh, Rembrandt! indeed, I think Hendrik is right. Oh! my dear lord, I pray thee, shun these men. They will work thee ill."

"Peace, Saskia. Thinkest thou thine husband unable to care for his own affairs? It is indeed strange that thou and thy cousin should make this turmoil about a man whom neither of you know, and one who has been of great help to me, and will, as I believe, do much more for me. I pray you, hold your peace on this subject. Let me at least think that you believe me to be of sound mind."

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Rembrandt was greatly offended. His pride had been touched. He arose from his chair and left the room.

“Oh! Hendrik, I am so sorry we have offended him; and really there was no need. We know naught of this Lazarus. We are in the wrong.”

“Yes, yes, Cousin Saskia, that is true. I must go. It’s just like poor Hendrik; I always blunder like that. Dear me; oh! dear me. I’m afraid it’s the Rhine wine, and I know that is why I don’t make more money. I must go, and I am sorry. The first visit, too. Oh, dear, the Rhine wine, the Jews—which is the worse, I wonder? They’re all mixed up together in my head. But the wine is a noble wine. I don’t believe the Jew is noble; no, I don’t. Farewell, cousin. Tell Rembrandt I meant no offence. I will come again soon, if you will let me, for indeed I meant no harm. Please forgive poor Hendrik.”

The honest print-seller left, greatly deploring the harm he seemed to have done, and yet not quite able to see why what he had said was not true. All the way home he kept on muttering, “The Jews, the Jews! In the hands of the Jews! Oh! dear! oh! dear! and just at the beginning of life! Oh! the Jews!” He was so disconsolate when he reached home that an unusually large bumper of the noble Rhine wine was needed to console him.

Saskia went in search of Rembrandt. She found him busy in preparing a plate for an etching. His ill-temper had entirely disappeared. Indeed, he seemed to have quite forgotten that anything unpleasant had happened. He was entirely

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absorbed in a new art-thought ; but he paused in his work to say a tender word to the young wife, and to smile upon her with the loving smile that made her heart beat wildly with gladness. She forgot all about the Jews.

CHAPTER XXX

Saskia's Sacrifice for Art

THE home life went on quietly, but joyously. Rembrandt hardly ever left his house except when called away on matters connected with his art. It seemed that he cared to see no one else in the world but the beloved Saskia. Even Albrecht was forgotten, unless he came to the home, which he often did. The faithful German took it not amiss that his friend came not to see him.

"Why, what could be more natural?" said Albrecht to himself. "He has his Saskia. He loves her. God bless them both! If I had my Hildegarde, methinks I would stay at home with her. I would ask nothing better. Perhaps I go to see them too often. It may be that I am in the way, but I can't help it. That lovely Saskia has promised to bring Hildegarde there, and she will keep her word. It will not be long now. She will soon succeed. Nobody could resist Saskia. I wonder, now, whether she has seen her yet. I must go over there again, and Saskia will tell me what she has done."

He went, but Saskia had not seen Hildegarde. She had been too entirely engrossed by Rembrandt. Each evening a new etching of her was to be made. The painter never tired of his charm.

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ing model; and Saskia's love made her always a willing sitter, even if at times she became a little tired. She would gladly have given her life itself for the man whom she adored.

One day Rembrandt brought a woman into the house, and took her to the studio. She was a very coarse-looking creature, and made Saskia shudder. A long time Rembrandt kept her in the studio, while Saskia waited anxiously. At last she went away, and Saskia opened the studio door and entered. Rembrandt was still busy on a painting of a nude figure. It was not a pleasing picture, for the model was not well-formed, and was even repulsive in her grossness.

"Rembrandt! oh! why do you paint creatures like that? They are not worthy of your brush."

"Well know I that, sweet wife of mine, but here in Amsterdam I cannot find any better models than this one whom you saw. There are few who will consent to pose for me, and paint the nude I must. There is no great artist who does not do that. It is the basis and also the highest touch in great painting, for even draped figures must be conceived with a thorough knowledge of the nude model."

"Is that true, indeed?" said Saskia, thoughtfully. "I did not know that, nor, indeed, much else about art, except to love it, and to reverence thee as its greatest master."

"Yes, it is true," said Rembrandt, "and I suffer daily because I can find none to paint but these coarse creatures. I know not what I shall do about this matter, for I fear my art will be misun-

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derstood, possibly even debased, unless I can find models in whom there is something of beauty."

"I am sorry, oh! so sorry, dear lord, and I am sorry not only for thee, but for myself. Oh! Rembrandt! how can I have such creatures in my home? I cannot tell thee what pain it gives me."

"Nay, nay, my own, if thou art troubled I will paint no more. There shall be no line of care of my making on that fair brow of thine."

"But thou shalt not give up thine art. In that thou art a king, and thou sayest this painting from the nude is a necessity? Without it thou canst not reach the heights thou aimest to reach? Saskia does not understand; Saskia wishes to think. Let me go, dear lord. I would be alone for a little while. I will join thee at the evening meal. I would think. Perhaps thy Saskia may help thee—but I would think."

Saskia left the studio. Rembrandt turned again to his easel, and was soon utterly absorbed in finishing the picture already nearly completed. He did not think again of the serious words Saskia had said as she left him. Indeed, he had hardly understood them, for all the time while she had been talking his mind had been partly on his picture.

Meanwhile the young wife had gone to her room that she might be alone and think. "Oh! I cannot have those creatures here! They pollute the house. Yet he said he must paint from the nude, and none but such as they would pose for him. His art would suffer, would die, if he could not paint from the nude. Yes, he said so. He

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knows. Why is it so, I wonder? I know not, but he knows. He tells always the truth. Why will not the better women be his models? It is only to serve his art. There could not be a higher object. To help him is to help one of the heroes of the art world. There has never been so great a one. There never will be again. It is a duty and a privilege to help him. Saskia! Saskia! of what art thou thinking? Why reproach others for not doing that which you do not offer to do yourself? Surely, if it is anyone's duty to help him, it is yours. You are his wife. It is not only your duty, but your joy and privilege, to help him in every way you can. Oh! why did I hesitate? Gladly will Saskia be his model, if he wants to paint her. It is a little thing to do for him, and often have I thought I would gladly lay down my life itself for his sake. I will tell him, and he shall paint me, and banish from our home these creatures from the streets."

At last Rembrandt finished his work, and came down to the dining-room for the evening meal. Saskia was waiting for him. Her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were bright. Her laughing mouth was for the moment sweetly serious. By this time Rembrandt had entirely forgotten their talk in the studio, and he was at a loss to account for the suppressed excitement of Saskia's manner. He knew that never had she looked so beautiful. Such seriousness, such look of high resolve, well became the merry maiden he loved. It did not banish the charm of her cheerfulness, but added to her expression a depth over which the ripples

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of mirth would play all the more delightfully because of the contrast.

Rembrandt looked in almost amazed admiration at Saskia's glowing face; yet the courtly painter questioned her not as to the cause of such unwonted excitement until the meal had been served and the maid left them alone. He spoke of his work of the day as he always did, and Saskia listened. Sometimes she put in a bright word or laughed a merry little laugh, as was her habit. This evening time in the home was already so delightful to them both, that neither would leave it from choice. They lingered around the table. The Rhine wine and the cheese were there. The beautiful pictures were about them. Sometimes there was a glowing fire under the great chimney-piece, and the dancing light of the flames was reflected from the polished wood and the shining leather of the high-backed chairs. Often at these times Rembrandt brought out his etching-plate and needle, and reproduced again and again the fair features of his wife as she sat opposite him. In these etchings he immortalized both her and himself. This evening, contrary to his wont, he did not seek to etch, but sat watching Saskia, for he felt she had something to tell him. He had not long to wait. Presently Saskia looked up and said, "Rembrandt, my lord, I have somewhat to say to thee."

"Say on, my beloved. Well knew I that thy dear mind was exercised about something that has much excited thee. Tell me, then, what it is."

"Oh! my dear master, I scarce know how to tell

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thee; but I am troubled, so troubled, about that woman who was here to-day. I cannot bear to have such people in this home. It can be helped. I know it can. Surely, surely, thou wouldst rather paint me."

"Saskia, Saskia! What sayest thou? How ever came such a thought to thee? How couldst thou ever dream that I would ask of thee to serve me in such a way?"

"I knew thou wouldst not dream of it unless I told thee how I abhorred the woman, and how willing is my love to make even greater sacrifices for thee and thy divine art. Thou saidst it was necessary. Who should minister to thy necessities except thine own Saskia?"

"My own beloved! Never was woman like thee! Thou art the very perfection of love; and now wouldst thou be, besides that, the inspiration of a struggling painter. Scarce know I what to say to thee. I am all unworthy of such a treasure. But no, Saskia, no, I will not ask this of thee."

"Thou didst not ask it, my dear lord."

"Let us talk no more of it; but this I tell thee, I will not have the woman here again, since thou likest it not. No more now, dear one. I am quite overcome by thine unselfishness."

"It is not unselfishness. Thine art is my glory. Gladly would I minister to it in any way that I can."

"No more, Saskia, I pray thee, no more, not now. Let me think awhile of what thou sayest. Think thou also. This may be the outcome of some sudden excitement."

“Nay, my lord, I have thought calmly over it; but I will say no more now, since thou bidst me not. I am only happy in making thee happy and in doing thy bidding.”

For some time this subject was not mentioned again between them. For awhile Rembrandt took to painting himself a great deal in what he called his leisure hours. There were not many of these, for his position seemed now assured, and commission after commission came to him. Nevertheless, he painted and etched himself a most astonishing number of times, donning new costumes, and taking a great variety of positions, even assuming different characters. But all this time, though he spoke not of it, the thought of Saskia's words was in his mind. At first he rebelled against even the suggestion of such a thing. He would not thus use the lovely woman. Perish the thought! Then he would go on with the great portraits, and his interest and absorption would cause him to forget all about it for awhile. Saskia said no more. She saw her husband busy from early morning until late in the night with the work that he loved above all else. She thought he was happy, and that was true. But, by and by, there came again this longing to paint from the nude. It seemed a necessity to study always the human figure. There was one portrait of the shipmaker's wife that was giving him much trouble. “I must study again from the nude, or I shall make a failure of this. How quickly we forget. The flesh-tones, the forms of the muscles, the shadows that even in drapery can only be correct if the

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underlying form is well drawn! Oh! it is true! art is divine. Saskia said so. She will help me. She longs to help me. What harm can it do? Surely none. She is beautiful. My art will live through her. I will paint her, then, as she said, and she will inspire me; and we will keep the picture here in the home, for she shall not be shamed." Thus did the selfish passion for art overcome the delicacy that should be in a love so intense and so pure as was Rembrandt's love of Saskia. But there was a grievous temptation. The lovely woman herself had urged him on, and art, his mistress, completed his conquest. Nay, he did but what many another had done. Why, there was hardly a great artist whose wife had not been his model. Surely he could not be blamed for following in the footsteps of the masters, and then he had not asked it. Saskia had herself urged it upon him. No need to tell the result of this struggle. All the world knows the pictures that Saskia inspired. It is true that she was an inspiration to his art, and Saskia loved to know that.

There were some things in the painter's life at this time that began to trouble the devoted wife a little.

"Rembrandt," said she, one day, "why goest thou not from the home at times to meet thy friends? Is it well, thinkest thou, dear lord, to stay always here with me? Albrecht comes at times, it is true, but methinks not many come. Sometimes the Jew, Lazarus; but, oh! Rembrandt, my own, none will come to see thee unless thou goest to see them."

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“Those are indeed strange words from a wife, and not so very long wedded—chiding her husband for too much devotion to his home. Saskia! my beloved, what wouldst thou have done had I been a roysterer in the tavern, like the others? It would have broken that tender heart of thine. Thinkest thou indeed they care not for me, and come not so often hither? I had not noted it. Well, well, be it as thou wilt. I will seek out Ephraim Cock and Jan Six, and try to see them more often. It is not that I do not admire and like these men, and others too; but my home, my wife, who would leave them? It is always a struggle.”

“Thy words ring sweetly in mine ears, but I will not recall what I have said. Go among them. That must thou do, else soon will they either forget or hate thee; and then trouble will come into thy life, and thy Saskia will be sad.”

“Trouble not thyself, sweet wife. It shall be as thou sayest. In all things would I please thee, if I could; and then too, dear Saskia, I know thou art wise, far wiser than I. Doubtless thy counsel is good. I wonder I thought not before about this matter. In very truth, I believe I think of little but painting and thee.”

CHAPTER XXXI

Hildegarde Seems Hard-Hearted

ONE morning Albrecht came to Rembrandt's home almost in despair. He had not seen Hildegarde, and he was afraid Saskia had forgotten her promise. The courteous German had long forborne to speak of his own matters. He did not wish to intrude upon the happiness of this newly wedded pair; but he felt sad, and at last he came to tell of his feelings and find sympathy. Saskia had not forgotten, but her mission to the wayward maiden had not succeeded as she had hoped. Hildegarde was not an easy person to approach, and, situated as she was in a strange land, where she had already met with many adventures, some of them not at all pleasant, and some quite dangerous, it was natural that she should be suspicious of any stranger.

When Saskia came to see her, Hildegarde knew nothing of her visitor. She had never even heard her name. Saskia was not aware of this. She thought the wife of Rembrandt would be known to everybody, and surely would meet with cordial reception anywhere.

Old Marjorie showed Saskia to the little sitting-room, and presently Hildegarde entered. She was superb in her beauty. Saskia caught her

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breath as she looked at her. There was no face in Holland like that ; nor was there such a bearing—so strong, so proud.

“ I am pleased to see you, my frow Rembrandt, is it not? I think that is the name my maid gave me.”

“ Why, surely that is my name,” said the bewildered Saskia. “ Knew you not that name before.”

“ Oh! yes, I think I have heard the name. Your husband is a painter, if I mistake not.”

“ You are jesting with me. There is no one of your intelligence who does not know the name of Rembrandt.”

“ I said that I knew it. May I ask to what I am indebted for the pleasure of your visit?”

“ I came to ask whether you would come to our home and meet my husband. I have heard of you from a young German, a dear friend of ours—Albert von Stoltzing—a fellow-countryman of yours ; and he said you were a stranger here and that you had been troubled, and I thought perhaps I might help you.”

“ I see how it is. This German—Albrecht von Stoltzing, I think you called him—is taking much too great a part in other people’s affairs. I know not the man. I never saw him until a very little while ago, and I am not at all sure that I ever care to see him again.”

“ But I did not ask you to see him,” said Saskia. “ Why thought you of that? He told me you were a stranger and in trouble, and I thought you might like to come to our home ; and if we can help you, we will.”

"I thank you most heartily. You are indeed a courteous lady—quite different from most of the Holland dames whom I have met. Just now, however, I must decline your most kind invitation; for I am caring for my cousin, who is very ill, and I cannot leave him. Besides that, I know perfectly well that the German you speak of asked you to come here. He has been following me too long, and I will have none of him. He is unmannerly. I understand not his actions, nor would I understand them. Let him go back to his own land, and that will I do as soon as my cousin is well. I hate this Holland."

Hildegarde gave a little defiant toss of the head, and the beautiful brown curls fell farther down upon the low white brow. Saskia thought she had never seen so beautiful a woman. She thought, too, that this proud princess was quite unapproachable; therefore she pitied Albrecht, and all the more because she wondered not at his love, but would rather have been amazed if he had not loved.

Saskia made no progress whatever. Hildegarde was not to be won over. She gave thanks for the courtesy of the visit, but she made no promise to return it; and at the end of their talk there was not a single word of comfort that Rembrandt's wife could bring to his friend. It was for that reason that she had kept silence so long, and had not even told Albrecht that she had seen Hildegarde.

This was the situation when at last the patient Albrecht could wait no longer, and came to ask

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of Saskia what she had done about Hinoegarde. It was a sad tale—hard for Saskia to tell, much harder for Albrecht to hear. Rembrandt meanwhile was etching most vigorously, and heard not a word of their talk.

“It is hopeless, then, you think, dear lady Saskia,” said Albrecht. “She cares not for me at all.”

“Friend Albrecht, I think you are in some ways the stupidest person I know. What is hopeless? Care for you? Why should she care for you? Think you I talked with her about you? Why, you never pleaded your own cause! She knows not that you love her. Surely you never told her so. She is simply annoyed and troubled because you follow her around in such a queer way. My dear friend, I must leave this matter to you. You yourself must win or lose at this game. Since I have seen this lady, whose beauty is a marvel, and whose temper is just as marvellous, I decline to interfere. You must fight your own battle, Herr Albrecht. Saskia loves peace, and greatly fears she might get into trouble if she tried to influence this fiery beauty of yours.”

“Oh! dear! oh! dear! I fear it is true. Yes, fiery perhaps, daring certainly; but, oh! how beautiful! There is tenderness there. I know it. I fear her not. I love her, and I will win her.”

“Indeed, I hope so, friend Albrecht; but you must do it yourself.”

“What are you two talking about so long?” said Rembrandt. “Why, I have made a whole etching, and still your tongues are clattering like millstones. Absorb not my wife thus, Albrecht,

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or I shall become jealous; and I am terrible when I am angry."

"Nay, nay, enough of anger for one day. Hildegarde was angry. I pray thee, my friend, be not thou angry, lest I be too much cast down."

"Albrecht, well I know you will not be too much cast down. I know your strength better than you know it yourself; but I must admit you have a task before you that would tax any man's energies. This German lady is, indeed, a very rare person. I never shall forget how her beauty attracted me, even when she was dressed as a man; but she eluded me, and would not have Rembrandt paint her portrait. In very truth, she is a remarkable person. What a pity I did not get that portrait of her! I believe it might have been one of my best works. Never mind, I'll have it yet; and if I catch this shy bird of yours, and keep her for a little while in the meshes of art's net, you may be sure, friend Albrecht, I shall use the opportunity to do the best I can for my friend. Don't lose heart. You have courage and friends. With these, a man can achieve anything, even the conquest of a wayward lady; and that, I frankly confess, is about as difficult a task as a man could undertake."

Albrecht heaved a deep sigh. His feelings were overwrought. He had waited so long and been so patient, and now found nothing to reward him—nothing but a hope held out to him by those he loved, but based on nothing very tangible.

"Rembrandt, Saskia, how can I thank you for what you have done for me, and for the loving

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words you have spoken? My life is rich in the dear friendship you give me, even if I fail in winning what I would prize above all else. But now I must go. I fear I am a dull companion to-night. I am simply adding my burdens to yours. Forgive me. I will try to pluck up heart again; and when I come to you the next time you shall find Albrecht cheerful at least, no matter what happens."

He took his leave. Rembrandt and Saskia sat down before the fire in the dining-room and talked together, as was their wont at this hour of the evening.

"What thinkest thou, Saskia mine? Will the German succeed?"

"Indeed, my lord, I know not. This lady is perilous. I cannot judge character as thou dost. Surely thou couldst tell all about her in one glance of those great eyes of thine. Why not see her, dear master?"

"Yes, yes, I will do that. I must paint her. Her beauty is extraordinary. Never did I see such loveliness, save thine, my own beloved."

"Nay, that is thy love. Well thou knowest I have not a tithe of the beauty of this German princess, for princess I know she is. Ne'er did I meet such majesty of bearing, such haughtiness; and yet, my own, there was something there that told of tenderness. Saskia loves, therefore Saskia can sympathize with love. I think not this Hildegarde loves now, but I am sure she can love; and once she yields to the passion that masters us all, it will be an opening of floodgates, and the man

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who wins her will be blessed beyond his utmost thought. But what has come over me? Not often do I talk like this. I was interested in the maiden. I was touched by Albrecht's distress. Forgive me for such long speech."

"Forgive thee, dearest? Well knowest thou I would listen forever to thy sweet voice."

"But, Rembrandt, thou knowest I can help no more now. I must bide at home now until the little one comes."

"My own, that is true. Thou shouldst not have gone there at all. I fear thou art overtired. Haste thee now to bed."

And so the evening ended, as many another before, with sweet converse between these married lovers. Nevertheless, Rembrandt lingered for awhile before the fire, buried in thought. He had been touched by Saskia's words as to the need of more outgoing from this home already grown so dear. Yes, that would be better; and surely he must do what Saskia said. Already he knew well there was a wisdom in his wife deeper than his own. He trusted her. He would follow her suggestions, for he knew they were good; yet, yet how could he? Art would soon possess him again utterly, and then he would forget. Surely there was no need of going to the tavern. Oh, no! not that! He hated it; carousing he abhorred. If that were necessary to make him popular, he would be a hermit always.

"Saskia," he thought, "thou wouldst not have thine husband a low roysterer, like these others about us. Not that! surely not that! but I must

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seek fellowship with some of the great ones—men like Jan Six and Ephraim Cock—and learn to know them as friends, if they will be friendly to me. Saskia is in the right. She always is. She is an angel; and by and by there will be the voices of children here, and I would not have the home friendless. No, it must be a sunny home. The spirit of art must not be a baleful one. Oh! how can I help an evil influence from it? Sometimes I think it is a curse and not a blessing, and yet how I love it! Oh, how I love it!”

CHAPTER XXXII

The Palma Vecchio

THUS placidly passed the time for months, and even years. Rembrandt carried out, in part, the suggestion of Saskia. He did come to know Jan Six well, and Ephraim Cock became his friend ; but it was at the cost of great effort. Ever more and more did the art and the home absorb him. The first child came, and there was great joy. It was a daughter, and she was christened Cornelia. Alas ! the joy was short-lived, for in a few weeks the little one died and was buried at the Zuyder Kerk. The funeral soon followed the christening, and the merry Saskia was much broken down, both in body and mind. Nevertheless, she kept on fulfilling, in the loveliest spirit, all her duties as a wife. The continual posing as a model was a great strain upon her. Rembrandt should have seen this, but where art was concerned he could see nothing, think of nothing else, and he continued to etch and paint her because of her loveliness ; and Saskia, ever true in her devotion to him and to his art, was always a willing and cheerful minister to her husband's need, at whatever cost to herself. Indeed, she thought not of the cost. To help him was enough. That was her joy and her glory, even to

the last day of her brief life. It was largely due to her ministrations of helpfulness that Rembrandt was prosperous at this time. One day he had received the proceeds of a number of paintings, and, after attending to the settlement of what was due for the expenses of the home, there was a considerable balance left. With this he went at once to Lazarus, meaning to pay this sum on his account with the Jew.

Now, Lazarus had used the money he got of Isaac, and some more besides of his own, and purchased a fine picture by Palma Vecchio—a scene from the Bible. Of course, he meant to make Rembrandt buy this great work, and pay him double what the cost of it had been. Rembrandt knew little about the market value of pictures or prints. Indeed, he was so chivalrous in his devotion to art that sometimes at an auction he would bid for some master-work two or three times what had been before offered, saying that it was a reproach upon the art lovers of his land that great works should be bought in a niggardly way. A man in such a mood was an easy victim for Lazarus, and this mood was habitual with the painter. The Jew only needed to take his time, and most often he had not long to wait—never, if he had a really good thing to offer.

Now, Rembrandt had come this day with the thought of making quite a large payment to Lazarus, and the Jew suspected this. He had kept close watch on his victim; and of late he had really become alarmed, fearing that Rembrandt would make too much, and free himself entirely from his

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clutches. Isaac was becoming frightfully anxious about it. The long waiting was too much for the miser, longing to finger the gold, where the more patient Jew, the Jacob of his tribe, knew how to wait. It was fortunate for Lazarus that at this very moment he had so tempting a bait to offer. The fish rose eagerly to the hook. The Palma Vecchio quite overcame Rembrandt.

"Now, my friend, what do you think of that work? Is that not a great painting?"

"True, Lazarus, quite true. Great, you said! Wonderful, I should say. Where got the man his art, I wonder. It is full of Italy's sunlight. Yes, Titian is the greatest colorist, but this man resembles him. How can we, who live under Holland's sombre skies, hope to equal those mellow glories—how, indeed? There is no way, except, perhaps, to keep their works by our side and seek inspiration from them when we paint. Ah! yes, that is it! The Rubens has been an inspiration to me. Would that I owned this, and many like it—such color! Oh, the glow! the glory! and the drawing is good, too."

"Why, good friend, that had I felt. I said to myself when I saw that picture: That is for Rembrandt. There is no other man here that knows the worth of that painting."

"Lazarus, I came not hither to buy pictures. I came to pay you a part of the debt I owe you. Well I know it is a large debt, Lazarus; bring me the account at once, and we will see how it stands at this time. Much I fear I am deeply your debtor, but I know not the sum. I will pay it, whatever it is."

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“ You want the account, you say? Why, friend Rembrandt, my man who keeps the books is away just now, and you know well that it takes time to make up that statement. When he comes back he shall do that, and I will send it to you. But Rembrandt, my friend, why think of that? The money is nothing to you. More have you made than you can use, and you will be very rich; but never, oh, never again, will you see one Palma Vecchio like that one.”

“ Lazarus, I believe you are right. I never did see the equal of it. Three thousand florins, did you say? It is not half the worth of it. Give it to me. Here is the money. Now mind you, Lazarus, this goes not into the account. Give me a receipt in full. There is the sum well told—nay, methinks there is more. Oh! yes! there are five hundred florins more. Credit me that on the account, Lazarus, and give me the picture quickly. Fain would I rejoice fair Saskia's eyes with the sight of so rare a treasure.”

Thus was concluded the matter between them. The Jew forthwith put down the five hundred florins to account of commissions on the purchase of the picture, and Rembrandt's indebtedness was not one whit lessened. He never looked at his accounts with Lazarus. He was no bookkeeper, and he thought the Jew could keep his accounts well enough. It was not necessary for him to trouble himself about such matters. He was painting pictures and making great etchings. Of course, Lazarus was a man who understood accounts and such matters. His function was

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to make money, but Lazarus could not paint pictures. Let Lazarus have his money. He was entitled to it since he earned it, and Rembrandt's home was daily growing more beautiful because of the Jew's work. Such works of art! Wonderful! How could a great artist live except amid such surroundings. Why! they were needed as an inspiration to his own work. They were needed to make all beautiful about Saskia, the loved one. Surely she ought to have the fairest home in all the world. Yes! yes! it was to be so.

The painter now was revelling in the riches of his art. His work seemed a mine of wealth.

"I am thankful, indeed," thought Rembrandt, as he left the Jew that afternoon and brought the magnificent Palma Vecchio to his home; "I am thankful, because my brush and the help of this noble Jew have enabled me to enrich the home of my love."

When Rembrandt came to his house, bringing with him the picture, he met Saskia at the door. She had been waiting for him, for he had told her he meant to see Lazarus and make him a large payment on his account.

"Oh! Rembrandt," said Saskia. "You have paid him, have you not? I am so happy. Bring me the receipt. We will put it here in the beautiful carved desk, along with your other papers."

"Oh, yes! dear Saskia, I have paid him in part, and he is making a statement of our accounts. In a few days he will send it to me; but Saskia, my

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own, look at this! Sawest thou ever so fine a tone, such a mellow golden glory? It is a Palma Vecchio, dearest, one of his greatest works. It is a dream, a marvel! Now, let us see, where shall we hang this masterpiece? In the dining-room, I think."

"Rembrandt, my own, why didst thou do this? Hast thou, indeed, bought of the Jew another picture? Surely there were enough here before."

"Saskia, I pray thee, speak not thus. Look upon the picture and delight in it. There will be many more to adorn the walls of this home, but few finer than this. I think it is a rare work—indeed, most notable, almost unmatched in the quality of its tone. I am proud that my Saskia has so beautiful a picture to grace the room where the great men of Amsterdam will come to greet her and enjoy her gracious hospitality."

"Yes, I believe that; but, my own best beloved, I want it not. The house is lovely enough as it is, and with thee in it no woman could ask more. Ah! who is that, I wonder?"

At that moment it happened that Jan Six had come to see again his artist friend. It was the loud sound of the brass knocker on the door that Saskia heard. Presently Jan Six entered and greeted the painter and his wife with the high-bred courtesy that marked him as one of the highest gentlemen in Holland. He was now a burgomaster, and, indeed, the chief among them. He was the ruler of Amsterdam, and well did he deserve such distinction. He was great in quiet-

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ness, and quiet in greatness. In many ways he resembled William the Silent. Later, in his portrait of him, Rembrandt told the story of his life, as only Rembrandt could tell it.

He came toward the painter with his usual dignity of manner, but with a kindness quite different from the proud spirit of Dr. Tulp. This man was a loving man. If he loved once, he always loved; and even now, though he had not known him very long, he had begun to love Rembrandt, and he never ceased to love him.

"I greet you with joy, friend Rembrandt, if I may call you friend. I think you have already allowed me that title. I assure you, I am proud of it. Your works are glorifying this town of ours. Who would have thought that this flat Holland, with naught of outward beauty, could have produced such an artist?"

"My friend—may I say, my dear friend?—why should not Holland produce great artists? I am not worthy of any kind word that would imply greatness, but this is a land of heroes. Look at the great William; look at Heemskerk. Think of Leyden and Alkmaar. Think of Gibraltar. Look to the Arctic Seas; look to the Indies. Surely, Holland is great; why not great painters then? The expanse of the sky and the never-tiring wind-mills below it are inspiration enough."

"Rembrandt," said Saskia, "I pray thee, say not more; for I fear that when thine art comes to thy mind, it might be there would not be so great an interest in it to another as there is to thee. Come hither, Mynheer Six, to the dining-room,

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and let us have some refreshment and look upon these pictures which my husband has put upon these walls. He loves the art of others better than his own."

"Indeed, my froww Saskia, I believe that his modesty almost equals his greatness. It has seemed to me that he thinks of his art as an unattainable thing—always there is something beyond."

"Indeed, Mynheer Six, that is true," said Saskia.

"My dear wife, never did I hear thee speak thus. What has come over thee? I beg you to pardon her, Herr Six. You know our wives are partial."

"But, my friend, said I not the same thing myself? Rembrandt, will you paint a portrait of me? There is none other in this land of ours of whom I would ask that."

"I am honored, indeed, Mynheer Six. Gladly would I leave to Amsterdam something that would remind our burghers of their greatest man—their leader."

"Who talks now of compliments and fine courtly words? I have often wondered, Rembrandt, where you learned that trick of speech—always the word in touch with the thought of the moment. Yet they say you were a miller's son."

"Oh, yes!" said Saskia. "He always told me that, therefore I know it is true; but, oh! if you had heard how he spoke to me when first we met you would not have dreamed that ever had he anything to do with mills or millers."

"Saskia, I pray thee, shame me not. I said but the truth, and that is what I have ever said to

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thee. Give me the benefit of sincerity. At least, I hope I am no time-server."

"Rembrandt," said Mynheer Six, "this conversation seems to be growing rather serious. There is no need for any reproaches. I ask you, as a great painter, to paint my portrait; you say you are honored to paint the portrait of one whom you call a great man. Is it not true, then, that compliments are even? What use in them, anyway? Let the work be done, and both of us will be contented."

"Yes, truly," said Saskia, "that is his spirit. It is the work that he cares for; and yet, Mynheer Six, it is a pleasure to know that when he says a pleasant thing he means it."

"Saskia, if thou sayest more, I will not paint at all—no, I meant not that; for I must paint Mynheer Six, and now I have time. We can begin at once. Will you come to the studio, Mynheer Burgomaster?"

"Rembrandt, I had not thought you would begin the picture to-day; but, if you will, I am at your service."

"I will begin it at once. Jan, oh, Jan!"

The little color-grinder was always within call. He appeared at once. "Have you colors ground and ready for a portrait, Jan?"

"Yes, master, I think so, master; I have been grinding all day, master. Yes, I think so, master; I hope they're good, master. I have done my best, master."

"Bring them hither to the studio. Saskia, my own, rest thee awhile. I would begin the portrait

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of our noble burgomaster. Never have I been so honored."

With graceful dignity Saskia arose. She made her farewell greetings to Mynheer Six with as courtly a manner as graced her father when he met Queen Elizabeth or William the Silent.

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Night-Watch is Ordered

“REMBRANDT,” said Mynheer Six. “Indeed, you are a man upon whom smile all the gods. At the summit of your art, blessed with such a wife, living in so beautiful a home! Think you not sometimes, my friend, that you have almost too much?”

“Nay, Mynheer Six, I know well I am blessed far more than I deserve, but there is upon me an incessant unrest. I cannot do what I would. My art baffles me, yet always beckons me on. I question often whether success is possible, but there is naught to do but try and keep on trying. Come hither, then. Let me see the pose. Oh! did you not leave your hat without? Methinks I would have that hat in my portrait. It is characteristic in our Amsterdam leaders. Jan, fetch the burgomaster’s hat. It must be lying yonder by the door.”

“Yes, master, I will fetch it, master. It is there. I saw him lay it down.”

In a few minutes Rembrandt was absolutely silent, absorbed in an intensity of thought. The brush-work came later; first was the comprehension of the subject. He seemed to read the mind, and make the character live through form and

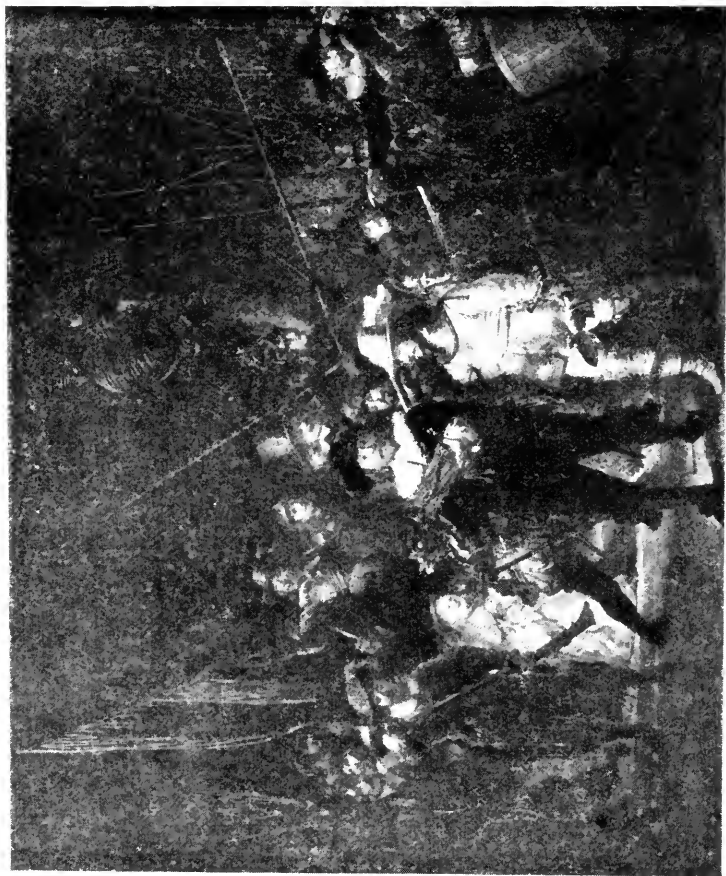
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color. Not one touch upon the canvas did he make until he seemed to see clearly the character of the man who was sitting before him. He had known Jan Six before. He knew of his history. He knew the calm, placid tenderness of the man, and the iron will that underlay and impelled the forces of his nature. He was benignant. His face had in it a blessing; but woe to him who crossed the path of Jan Six when he was aiming at some good thing for his town and his country. There was no more irresistible man when aroused to a struggle for the right. There is such strength combined with tenderness. The very sweetness flashed forth from the eye with vivid power even in the moment of battle for a great cause. Such a man was Mynheer Six. Rembrandt thought: "I have seen one like him; I verily believe my own dear Albrecht would fight like a hero, though he calls himself a dreamer."

At that moment there was a rude interruption. The brass knocker was banged violently—so violently that poor Jan went nearly out of his wits.

"Oh! oh! oh! there must be a fire. Oh, God! what is that?" He hardly dared to go to the door. But, bang! bang! bang! went the knocker, and the trembling boy had to open the door at last, though so frightened that his knees shook under him and he could hardly stand upright.

"What, ho! there within, why not open the door? Are you all laggards here in Holland? I think so?" The door was opened by the trembling Jan. "Why, you little varlet, much I fear I



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frightened you. I want to see your master. Where is Rembrandt? I have something to say to him at once; understand, at once. Time is passing. I said at once, did you hear?"

"Hear? did I do anything but hear? Oh! what a noise! Was the knocker broken? Let me look."

"You young rascal, go straight to your master, and tell him I must see him instantly."

"Oh, yes, I will go. The knocker is not broken."

"Curses on your knocker; what mean you, boy? Tell him I want to see him."

"Yes, yes, great man, I will tell him. Oh, the knocker! The great man wants to see him."

"You little idiot! Well, I don't know, perhaps I am the idiot after all. Did I tell you my name? I believe I did not."

"Your name, master, soldier, no, I know it not. I only heard the knocker."

"Ha! ha! ha! You are right! I said naught. I was in haste. Tell your master Ephraim Cock would speak with him at once."

"But, my lord, my great one, I cannot speak to him now."

"Why not, you little scoundrel?"

"He is painting, sir; and when he paints, sir! Yes, sir, you can't; no, you can't."

"You are crazy. You can't what?"

"Oh, please, sir, you can't speak to him, sir. He gets so angry, sir."

"Get away here. Where is he now?"

"He is in the studio; please, sir, don't go in."

"Damn the studio. I must see Rembrandt a

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few moments. Show me the room, or I'll make you wish you never had been born."

The trembling Jan complied, and Ephraim Cock, angry and impatient, came straight upon the calm burgomaster and the absorbed painter. Neither noticed him. He stood just within the door for a minute or two, and then the perfect quietness of the place, and the utter absence of any recognition of him began to impress him very strangely. He! Ephraim Cock, of the Civic Guard! Why, yes! certainly! Not noticed! Well, after all, why should he be noticed? The fiery soldier looked at the burgomaster, one of the arbiters of Amsterdam's destinies. He looked on the greatest of Amsterdam's painters, working diligently, evidently inspired. "I rather think I am a fool," said Ephraim Cock. "I have no business here;" and he strode out of the studio and went to the dining-room below, where he waited with a patience most befitting, but up to this time quite unknown to the doughty warrior. After a time, which seemed very long to Ephraim Cock, Rembrandt came down, and Jan Six followed him.

"Well, well, you must have a lot of work to do, if it keeps you so long as all this. I don't know how long I have been waiting, and I could not find a drop to drink. Rembrandt, have you not a glass of Rhenish in the house? I am very thirsty."

"Oh, Mynheer Cock, I must humbly beg your pardon. Really, I was not aware that you were here. Jan, you rascal, why did you not tell me Mynheer Cock was here?"

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"But, master, you know, master, you were painting, and I dared not go near you."

"Yes, yes, I think so. Mynheer Cock, I am impatient of interruption, and this boy knows it. Now, what would you have of me? I am at your service. Forgive the long waiting, of which I knew nothing."

"Forgive! nothing to forgive! Waiting! yes, I hate that! But let it pass. Rembrandt, you know about the Civic Guard?"

"I should say I did. I remember one day when I followed a beautiful woman in the streets here, because my friend Albrecht loved her, and I wanted to find out where she lived; and when I came near to her she threatened to call out the guard on me. I suppose that must be the Civic Guard. Yes, I know it quite well enough."

"Why, man, you talk most strangely. The guard was not called to arms at that time, I am sure."

"No, thank God! they were not," said Rembrandt.

"I am here on quite another affair, Rembrandt. You know, of course, all the Doelen pictures. We all know your masterpiece—I think that is what they call it—the lesson in something—oh! a doctor—Tulp, yes, that's the name, at least I think so."

"Yes, Mynheer Cock, that is the name, and the subject of the picture is a lesson in anatomy. I see you know, and I am gratified by your remembrance of it."

"Well, we want a picture of the Civic Guard.

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Do you think you could paint one as good as the other thing—that dissection, or anatomy, or lesson, or whatever you call it? Don't speak yet. I must say something more. We soldiers don't want to be dissected. Of course, we get killed sometimes; but could you not paint us in motion, you know? We fight sometimes. When we're dead, why, it doesn't matter, if we have done our duty; but couldn't you show us as we are when we go out to fight?"

"Mynheer Cock, I am somewhat bewildered by this sudden request. I have just been trying to paint a portrait of our great burgomaster, Jan Six. Not a word has he spoken yet. I fear we have talked too much."

"Nay, nay," said Jan Six; "on the contrary, the talk is most interesting. I would gladly listen longer. Rembrandt, surely your brush can do this that is asked of you by Mynheer Cock. I know you have not attempted it before, nor has anyone else, but you can do it. Let my portrait rest for awhile. It can wait, but paint now the Civic Guard, and let Amsterdam be honored in her heroes."

"I am willing to try; but paint them in action! Did you not say that, Herr Cock?"

"Yes, I said that."

"But how do it? Are you not quite peaceful here in Amsterdam?"

"Rembrandt," said Mynheer Cock, "you must have been asleep. Peaceful, you said! Well, it is true the Spaniards have not gotten in here, but they are trying their best. Why, man, you might

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be murdered in your bed to-morrow night by one of them, unless we of the Civic Guard can find out what they are about and kill them first. That's the only thing to do. If you don't kill them, they will surely kill you."

"Mynheer Cock, you do not mean that there are Spanish conspirators here now, as there were a few years ago, when the children heard them talking there by the Dam, and told the guards about it?"

"How can I tell, Mynheer Rembrandt. The thing has happened once, it might happen again; but mind you, my friend, the Civic Guard is always ready for action, unless their banquets are too much for them. I wonder why they drink so much; I wonder why they eat so much. The number of sausages that Heutenburgh can consume! really, you know. Why, Rembrandt, there was one other man who could do that—Franz Hals. Perhaps you may have known him."

"I did know him; knew him well. Yes, I know what you mean. Poor Hals! Still, he is a great painter."

"I suppose so, but I don't want our Civic Guard painted the way he painted his Doelen pictures. If you can't do better than that—oh, well! I know you can."

"Mynheer Cock, I will do my best. Mynheer Six, will you pardon me if I have to wait a little while before I finish your portrait? It will not be long. The subject is dear to me, for I hold you to be my friend."

REMBRANDT

"Yes, Rembrandt, the subject of the Civic Guard is a far greater one, I think, even than the anatomy lesson. Wait, said you? Gladly will I wait, and may you be prospered in this work; for I think, indeed, though I know little about art, that the subject is one that surely ought to interest everyone. Rembrandt, may I give one suggestion, though it seems presumption? I do not await your answer. What I meant was this: get into the picture something of the immortal William."

"I thank you, my friend; I might not have thought of that, save for your word. I will try."

"Rembrandt," said Mynheer Cock, "you will begin the picture at once, I hope."

"Yes, yes, I will; but I would like to know more about those Spanish conspirators, and the children who told about them, you said. That is most interesting, and you said there might be such conspirators here to-day. How strange! I never thought of such a thing; but, after all, I think little. I only try to paint."

The courtly burgomaster and the impetuous captain of the Civic Guard took their leave, and the painter did indeed begin to think. Such a subject! Such possibilities! Could one study that from life, as the "Anatomy Lesson" had been studied? If it could be done, it would certainly be a most fortunate happening. Sometimes the gods give painters just such opportunities; but how tell about it? how know? Wait then,

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study the Civic Guard, learn more about the Spaniards.

“Why, yes,” thought Rembrandt, “I might have known that possibly these conspirators are here even now; I will try to find out about that.” He did find out.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Hendrickje Comes to Amsterdam

FAR away in the Zealand land—at least, it seemed far away to the slow Hollanders—there were some peasants who thought it might be well to go to Amsterdam—so great a place! “Yes, we will go there.”

Hendrickje Stoffels was one of this family. These people went toward Amsterdam in the usual slow way of the Dutch, but they had more trouble than often came even in those days. There was an attack of the Spaniards on a little town near the sea-coast. The Dutch did what they always did under William’s training—opened the dykes. It was disastrous for this little party. Only two of them escaped the flood—Hendrickje and her brother. He was older, but not yet a man. Still, he had courage and he loved his sister. The waters had overflowed the earth, but there was a dyke; yes, there was a road on that not yet washed away. Hans saw it. “Oh! Hendrickje! we may yet be safe. Come, come! Let me help. Can you swim? No, I thought not. Let me help thee.” The brave lad succeeded; and at last the young girl was up above the flood, and on the road that led to Amsterdam, not very far away from the town, though they knew not they were so near.

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“Oh! oh! oh! Hans! I am dying, Hans! Let me alone. I cannot walk. I wouldn't want to. Please let me alone.”

“Come, dear sister. I know you will. Oh! what a dreadful day! My God! my God! are we all to die? Is there a curse on this land? Oh! what is it? My God! my God!

They staggered rather than walked along the road and came, at last, to Amsterdam, though greatly surprised to see so soon the gates and spires of the town.

“Why Hendrickje, look! There it is! We were only a little way from it. Oh, why were father and mother drowned?”

“What saidst thou, Hans—drowned! I think I am dreaming, Hans. Hold me. Oh! I shall surely fall.”

It was true that she was fainting. Food and wine were needed. Where find them? The young Zealander knew nothing of Amsterdam; but it happened most fortunately that the road they had chanced upon led them to the very centre of the town—the great square that was the place where now stands the Bourse. There were inns in plenty, and it was not long before Hans had found some good Rhine wine and a bit of sausage.

“Now, Hendrickje, sit thou there a little while, for I must find a place for us to lodge.”

“Indeed I will, dear brave Hans. Oh! what a brave Hans; and yet, am I awake? No, I think not. I must still be dreaming. Who is that lovely little girl? Oh, another dream, I think. Please tell me, little girl, are you alive?”

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The child to whom Hendrickje spoke was the daughter of Captain Ephraim Cock. She had become tired at the long banquet. These banquets really were much too long, and for children quite past endurance. The banquet was her father's banquet, in honor of his election as Captain of the Civic Guard; but what cared the little girl about all that? Run out and play? Yes, that was what she wanted to do, and did it.

"Am I alive, did you say? Why, what is the matter with you? I am afraid. I will go back." The little maiden started to go again to the hall of the Civic Guard, but Hendrickje called her back. "Oh! please don't go! I am so tired and lonely. Please come back, and sit on this bench and talk to me, for brother Hans has gone away to find a place where we might sleep, and it is hard to be alone; and father and mother are dead, and I am—no, not dead, but nearly. I don't know. Please come and talk to me. You are a lovely girl. You are beautiful. Do you live here?"

"Oh, yes! my father is the greatest man in this place. Did you ever see my father? Oh, of course not. You never were here before. Well! you will see him. He is at a feast now. I think they call it a feast—something about shooting and getting prizes. I am only a little girl, I don't know much, but I heard something just now. Listen! Who is talking there? What did you say your name was? You did not say."

"Hendrickje is my name, and what is yours? sweet girl?"

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"I told you, I am Captain Cock's daughter."

"And who is Captain Cock? Oh, yes! you said he is the big man and has the big feast, all given for him. Yes, yes, I know. I forgot; but who is talking there? I heard them before. Oh, I am frightened."

"Why are you afraid? Let us listen. That is better than playing ball. What are they saying, I wonder. They don't see us. No, they don't. Sit quiet. Let us hear. They can't hurt us."

"But, oh! if they did see us!"

"They won't; now just keep as quiet as a mouse. There's more fun for me here than in the big place where they are eating—oh! so much more! Wait, listen, what are those men talking about?"

"Carlos, there could be entrance here. See you the St. Anthony gate? It is ill-guarded. There are but few of their lazy Dutchmen near it. They are asleep, I think. They will be to-morrow. Now, let us tell the commander. It is surely easy to make entrance here, under cover of night. You know that our ships are not far off. Let us land our men, and break in at night, and seize that place where the Dutch guardsmen, as they call them, are roystering now. Once we get that, Amsterdam is ours."

"Friend Jago, how far off are the ships?"

"They are near by, waiting to help in this attempt."

"Yes, but are they near enough? Better wait and be sure. Are you certain that no one knows of our plans? Ha! what is that? I heard some voices, I am sure, Let us look. It is as I said.

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There is somebody there. We may have been overheard. Jago, you are frightened!"

"I am not; there they are. What? two girls? They must have heard; they were sitting there. Let us seize them at once."

These two Spaniards ran toward Hendrickje and Hiskia Cock. Hendrickje was not a fleet runner, and she was tired—oh! so tired, because of the flood and all her trials; but the other girl was as fleet as an antelope. She escaped; but the Spaniards seized Hendrickje and bore her off between them very rapidly toward the road that led to the sea, where the Spanish vessels were waiting.

"I will go and tell father. Yes, I will. Father, he will chase them, those awful men." And she ran as quickly as she could to the banquet-hall of the Civic Guard, where she had been so long. Rembrandt was there; and when the little girl came in, giving the alarm at the top of her voice, he heard, and said: "Captain Cock, this is no time for sport. Put all that away. I believe this child is telling us something to which we ought to pay good heed. Didst thou say Spaniards, little one?"

"Yes, I think one was Carlos, and one was Jago."

"And there was another little maid with thee? What did they with her?"

"I don't know. They took her away."

"Come, let us away from here. It is another conspiracy. Come, Captain Cock, Lieutenant Heutenburgh. At once, let us go. Beat the drum,

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Mynheer Bancoek. Unfurl the standard there. This is a time for action."

"Who is in command of this company, Mynheer Rembrandt?"

"Oh! I know you are. Pardon! But come, let us find the Spaniards, and rescue the poor girl."

"To arms, my friends! Load arquebuses. Pike-men! be ready. Forth now, toward the Dam as quickly as ye may! Forget the feasting! Onward!"

Onward they went. Rembrandt, unarmed, went with them, and as they started on their quest he said: "These are our Dutch soldiers. Would that I were one of them. This is far better than painting. What excitement! Yet some may be killed, but they do not seem to care. Oh, the little maid—and carried along by those villains. I will go to find her."

The soldiers swept on with a rush. They came to the Dam. There was no one there.

"Hold!" said Captain Cock. "Those villains must have taken this road, the one that leads most directly to the sea. Surely they are hoping for help from their ships. On! I say! On! quickly!"

These Dutchmen entirely forgot their habitual slowness. Their blood was up. The Spaniards always set it on fire. In solid column, but at a run, they rushed along the road. The conspirators were completely surprised. They ran as hard as they could and left Hendrickje, half-dead, in the middle of the narrow road. It was almost a miracle that Captain Cock's band did not trample her in the dust; but they passed on without hurt-

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ing her, and Rembrandt, who was behind, found her lying there. The Dutch caught the Spaniards, and there was short lease of life for them. They would not tell what they were doing, and without further waiting they were killed on the spot. Then Captain Cock's band turned back, and soon the leader, who was in front, like all the Dutch captains, found his artist friend with the body of the half-lifeless girl in his arms.

"Rembrandt, whom have you there? Who is the girl?"

"I know not; but she is the maiden those Spaniards had seized. What can we do with her?"

"I know not; but if she has fainted, bring some water quickly—any of you. Make haste."

That was soon done, and Hendrickje revived enough to tell her name, and how she came to be there.

"She is an orphan, then, poor child! poor child! Let us take her to the orphan home, Captain Cock. Think you not that is best?"

"Yes, it is; but she is not of our Amsterdam folk, if I heard rightly what she said. Nevertheless, I am sure they will not refuse her refuge there."

"They will not. They could not." And so it happened that Hendrickje, half-carried by Rembrandt, and followed by the Civic Guard of Amsterdam, found lodgement and rest in the great asylum, which was the noblest charity of Holland's capital.

CHAPTER XXXV

The Sketch of the Night-Watch

IT had been a time of the most intense excitement for Rembrandt, but he had been away from his home so long that Saskia was much alarmed. That was something so unusual, so unprecedented.

"Where hast thou been, my own, tell me?"

"Where have I been? Oh, my Saskia! I have had a most extraordinary experience. I have learned—at least, I think I have—how to paint the Civic Guard in action, because I have seen it; and such action! Saskia! I wish you could have seen them chase the Spaniards, and kill them the moment they caught them."

"Rembrandt, why were you there? Why did you go into a battle? Tell me, why?"

"I did not go into it, Saskia. I only followed behind the Guard. You know, I was asked to the banquet; and it is not long since you told me I ought not to stay always in my home, but to go out at times."

"Yes, that is true, I remember; and you went to the banquet. But why was there a fight?"

"Why, Saskia, some little girls—one of them was Captain Cock's daughter—had overheard, in the big square, some talk between two Spaniards,

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who were spies and seeking to find a way for the Spanish forces to take Amsterdam. One of the little girls they caught and took away with them; but the other escaped, gave the alarm to her father, and the Civic Guard went out at once. Their quickness was astonishing."

"Rembrandt, tell me! What became of the little girl? Did they carry her off with them?"

"Saskia, it was of that I wished to speak. I found the poor child half-dead. She was lying in the middle of the road, and I see not why the soldiers did not tread upon her; but she escaped, as it were, by a miracle. With the help of the others I brought her to the asylum, where they care for the orphans of Amsterdam. Saskia, the poor child had lost her father and mother as they were coming here from Zealand! The Dutch had opened the dykes because of a Spanish attack on one of our towns, and most of the party were drowned; but this girl escaped because of the bravery of her brother."

"Oh, Rembrandt, let us go at once to see the poor child. It may be that we can help her. I know now why you stayed away so long. It was a good and a brave deed. Thy Saskia is more proud of thee than ever, if that were possible. Come, let us go."

"Gladly will I go, dearest Saskia. I knew thy tender heart would be touched, even at the very thought of such suffering; but I think there is little to do at present, for she is well cared for now, at least for the time."

"Never mind! Come, let us go. My heart is

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sore for the suffering of one so young and friendless. Did the brother come back?"

"Nay, Saskia, we found him not; I know not what has become of him."

Rembrandt and his wife went directly to the asylum. Hendrickje had not recovered from the effect of her awful experience. She was in bed, but Saskia was admitted to the room where she lay; and she talked with the young girl a few moments, saying soothing words and telling her not to be downhearted, for there were some in Amsterdam who would take care of her. The little maiden was comforted by the sweet words, and even more by the lovely face, with its look of tenderness that had always been there when Saskia looked upon young people ever since the mother had lost her own children.

Soon Hendrickje fell asleep, and Saskia came down and rejoined Rembrandt. "Oh, the poor child! How terrible! Rembrandt, sawest thou her beauty? Thou didst not speak of that."

"Indeed! yes! I saw it. It is a rare face, a rare form. I knew not that our Dutch peasants could look like that. I must paint her, but not until I finish my picture of the Guard. Let us go back now, dearest. I wish to begin my sketch."

"Yes, we will go; but what to do about her? Oh! I think I know. We need a little maid to help in the dining-room. She is young, but she could do something, and later she would do more. I wonder if she would take such a place?"

"I think it is likely that she would do that, but for the time, my own, leave her where she is. She

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has the best of care. Moreover, I want to paint her there. The garb of those orphan children is singularly interesting. The building, too, is quite worth painting. I would paint her at one of the windows that looks out upon the court. Even now would I paint her. I must hasten, but the other sketch must first be made. I have wasted much time."

"Oh, my dear lord, surely thou hast not wasted time. That is not like your kind heart. It was an errand of mercy, and you wanted to help the young girl. I know you did."

"Yes! yes! but I must begin my sketch."

"Wilt thou sketch without getting the soldiers here? Why, that is not thy way of working!"

"The sketch is only a composition, a thought. Later I will paint in the portraits."

They went back to the home, and Rembrandt rushed to the studio. Now he had forgotten everything but the picture that was already real to the eye of his mind.

"This must be a large picture—yes, surely larger than the 'Anatomy Lesson.' How many figures? About twenty-five, I think—Cock in the centre, of course; Heutenburgh beside him. Oh, the little girl! She must be in the centre too. She gave the alarm. Now this is troublesome, there is not room to put in all these men—not their entire figures. I can at best only get in the heads of some of them; that I must do. Perhaps there will hardly be room for that, but I hope it can be done. I must make a picture, and I must centre the interest on Cock and the little girl. Let me try! It is for-

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fortunate that I have the big canvas here. I thought I should need it." So alone in the study, with only the wondering, faithful Jan beside him, holding the charcoals and crayons, Rembrandt began the work. The day wore on. He was called to the mid-day meal; he heard not the call, nor would he have come if he had heard it. Saskia came to the studio and entered unperceived. At a glance she saw the painter's intense absorption. It would be unkind to interrupt him. Later she would give him needed refreshments, when he would be forced by very fatigue to leave the great canvas. It was a long time—indeed, only the gathering shadows of the evening forced the painter from his work. "Why, I cannot see! What is the matter? If I lose my eyesight, I might as well die; or, is it dark here? Is that you, Jan?"

"Yes, master."

"How long have you been here?"

"I know not, master. It is a very long time, and I am hungry, and my back is nearly broken, master."

"Ah, that is it, then; the day is over. I see, I see. Why spoke you not to me before?"

"Please, master, I didn't dare. I was afraid you would be angry, master."

The sketch was completed, put in with strong lines of charcoal and crayon, and a few flat tones in sepia, to suggest the color scheme. In it even now was the breadth, the vitality, the movement, of the great Night-Watch. There was to be added the life of each one of those Dutch civic soldiers.

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Saskia had been sitting for some time in the back part of the room. She would not interrupt him, for she herself was artist enough to appreciate that a masterpiece was being produced before her eyes—yet, oh! how much it cost! Well she knew the weariness that would come afterward. When the painter ceased his work on compulsion, because of the lack of light, Saskia spoke. "Rembrandt, my own husband, thou art too tired." It was true. Rembrandt reeled and nearly fell as he left his easel. Such were the efforts that shortened his life. Saskia came quickly toward him. She had foreseen the result of such continuous labor, and had in her hand a glass of strong wine, which she gave him instantly. It prevented his fainting. "Please come; oh! my dear! Please come and eat. Oh! do come quickly. Thinkest thou, my own, that it is well to die for thine art? Come, I say."

"Yes, I have done too much, I suppose. I meant it not. I forgot. I will come. Where is Albrecht? Saskia, I would show him the sketch. He knows; look at his Dürer prints. Oh! where is Albrecht? I fear, Saskia, I am not quite myself. The work has overcome me. I will go to the dining-room, as thou sayest. Why, I wonder when I last ate anything? Jan!"

"Yes, master."

"Go, seek Herr Albrecht."

"But, master, I can't; I haven't eaten any more than you. Oh, I am so tired."

"True. Well, go get something to eat, and then seek Herr Albrecht."

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"Yes, master, I will, I will. Oh, somebody get me something to eat."

"Come, both of you," said Saskia. "There is plenty to eat below, and long enough, indeed, has it been waiting."

"Saskia, never in my life before did I see thee lose patience."

"Nay, I have not quite lost it, but I wonder why I have not. If thou dost such things, how canst thou think that I could be patient?"

They went to the dining-room, and poor little Jan ate like a shipwrecked sailor rescued from a raft. Rembrandt, too, was hungry, but still thinking of his picture, so that at times he forgot the food.

"Jan, hurry there; wilt thou eat everything in the house? Haste, I would see Herr Albrecht."

"Yes, indeed, master. I will, I will. Oh, one more sausage! It won't take long, master, not long—only one more."

At last the lad was satisfied, at least for the time, and went in search of the German.

"Saskia! I am very anxious indeed to know what Albrecht has to say about this work. I think him a really great critic, though I verily believe he does not know it himself."

"I think that, too. Now, it is a pity that Albrecht does not do more with his powers. I am going to have a talk with him about that very thing."

"Saskia, thou shouldst know that when a man is in love, and his lady smiles not upon him, he is not in that state of mind which could mean good

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work. Wait for Hildegarde for awhile. She is wayward, impetuous, perhaps capricious, but she will learn to love. I know it; I saw it in her face; but, Saskia! dearest, Albrecht can criticise even now, though possibly he could not do work of his own."

"Yes, my dear lord, that is true. Well, Jan has gone to fetch him soon."

It was as Saskia said. Albrecht came almost as she spoke. He seemed downhearted and weary; but he was glad to come, for he had not been in Rembrandt's home for some time.

"What is it, friend Rembrandt? You sent the little boy for me. Can I help you in any way?"

The greeting was rather abrupt, and lacked the German's usual courtesy.

"Albrecht, come here. I would show you my sketch," said Rembrandt.

"Yes! yes! but, Mistress Saskia! most humbly do I beg your pardon. Indeed, as I entered I saw not that you were there."

"That matters not, Herr Albrecht. My husband wanted to know your thought about his new picture. Oh! the great one he is painting now! Oh! I ought not to say that! Of course, you should judge for yourself. I am foolish about his work, I think."

"Saskia, hold thy peace, and let me take Herr Albrecht to the studio."

"As thou wilt, but may I not also go? I am no art critic, but I should love to hear what our dear friend says."

"Come, then, come; but hasten, for Captain

THE SKETCH OF THE NIGHT-WATCH

Cock will be here soon, and I would not show him the sketch unless it is good."

The three went to the studio. When Albrecht saw the great canvas, with only a sketch on it, he stepped back in amazement.

"What is that, Rembrandt? No! tell me not! I see what it is; but where did you find the truth about the Guard? No! don't tell me that either. I would rather find out for myself, if I can. Surely it is the Guard. It is more than the Guard. It is the life of the Guard."

"Is that indeed true, Albrecht?" said Saskia.

"Of course it is true. He never painted anything but truth."

"Friend Rembrandt, I knew your greatness. I thought I did. You know that I have always loved you, but this! Why, only a sketch and yet the very life of the Guard! Even in Nuremberg we Germans have heard of the deeds that have been done here. I was not with you in the adventure, dear Rembrandt, but surely it must have been like the other. It is as real as the 'Anatomy Lesson.' "

"Never mind about the adventure, dear friend. The only question is about the reality and vitality of the picture."

"Why, Rembrandt! there is no question about that. Even the sketch moves of itself. I wonder it comes not quite off the canvas; but the little girl—why the little girl, and in the very midst of it all? You must tell me. I know you saw it, Rembrandt. Surely, you are a favorite of the gods. You could not have sketched that unless

REMBRANDT

you had seen it; and now I know just what you will do. Every one of those soldiers, from Captain to drummer, will be alive in the picture; yes, I see that already, but how did you do it? Tell me the story."

"Not now, Albrecht. Your criticism was what I wanted. If this sketch produces such an impression upon so keen an art critic as you are, that is quite enough. I will go on and finish the work."

"Keen art critic? What mean you, Rembrandt? You never said such a thing to me before."

"Oh! perhaps I never did, but it is true just the same. You know your Dürer prints, do you not? Well, a man who knows those is almost an artist himself."

"Oh! well, I never thought about that before. Art critic! I wonder what such a man does. I don't remember any of them. Do you know any that ever did anything, Rembrandt?"

"Do anything? Ha! let me think. Yes, sometimes they do a great deal."

"But who? Rembrandt, tell me the names of these men. If I am a great one, as you said, I am sure I did not know it; and it might be well to use the gift, if it is one. Oh, Rembrandt, you are only making fun of me; why talk before such a masterpiece? I know it is not yet done, my dear, dear friend; but what you have done! What is it? Let me look again. I think, my friend, you have painted—no, you haven't painted, only sketched—the life of the land whose ruler was the immortal William."

THE SKETCH OF THE NIGHT-WATCH,

“Albrecht, have I any of his spirit in that sketch? Mynheer Six told me it should be there. Is it there?”

“Surely, surely; but, my dear friend, I cannot criticise it without the color. I don’t wish to criticise it at all. This will I say, I know the life is in it; and if the other people do not know it, why they cannot, and that is the end of it, so far as they are concerned.”

“Yes, Albrecht, that is the truth. The woful part of it is that they do not know, and greatly do I fear this picture will make trouble.”

“How, Rembrandt?”

“Let it rest for the time. We have talked enough about it. Where is your lady, your love, the beautiful Hildegarde?”

“Oh, Rembrandt, please do not speak of her. Do not, I pray.”

“Ah, you love her no more, then, else would you talk of her without ceasing.”

“Love her no more! love her no more! Could I ever love aught else? But, my friend, she will have naught to do with me.”

“When saw you her last?”

“It is but a day or two past. I went to the house and I asked about Hildebrandt.”

“You did? Did you ask about anybody else?”

“How could I? The beautiful lady was before me. There was nothing to say, for she turned away and left me staring at her. I could not speak one word.”

“Oh, very well, perhaps it was better not to speak, if you had no more courage than that.”

REMBRANDT

“Rembrandt, she treated me in the same way when we came back from Egmont. She will never look at me again.”

“Humph! not unless you give her a chance, and a good many chances. Friend Albrecht, I find the painter gets to love the thing he looks at, if there is beauty in it or worth of any kind. I wonder if it might not be that same way with a woman?”

“Hold your peace, Rembrandt. I will not hear such words about Hildegarde. She is an angel—no, not just that. She is better than that. Yes, she is an angel—like which one? Not St. Michael. Oh, he was a man! Yes, I mean a man angel. St. Agnes—no, she didn’t fight, but she didn’t love, either. There is some angel that both loved and fought. Yes, that is Hildegarde.”

“A fighting angel! and a woman, too! Albrecht, I believe you have lost your wits.”

“Yes, I knew that long ago; but it is worse to lose your heart, and mine is quite gone.”

“Albrecht, you have not lost all your heart. There is some of it left for me. I know it. I thank you for your criticism. I am more than delighted by your enthusiasm about my work. You can never know what that means to me.”

“If I have given you pleasure by my words, I am more than delighted, my dear, dear friend.”

CHAPTER XXXVI

Again Hildegarde to Undine

OH, my dear, I don't know what to say. I am perfectly sure I do not. Then you will answer—if you do answer—"Why say anything?" Oh, that's perfectly true, if you don't know; but still there is something to say—at least, I think there is. Now, he met me only a little while ago. Of course, I don't mean Rembrandt, who followed me about the streets, and I came very near calling out the Civic Guard to protect me; I was near their hall. But Rembrandt ran away when I spoke about the guard. Now, Undine, think what you will, I went afterward to Rembrandt's studio, and disguised as a man! and the great painter wanted to paint my portrait, in such a garb! Think of it! But, oh! there is so much worse to follow. I went to Egmont in search of my Cousin Hildebrand, who was ill, and Dr. Tulp had sent him there. What did I find? A fight, and a big fight, too. They were trying to take a castle where Hildebrand was lying sick, maybe dying. The lazy Dutch people wouldn't go to the rescue. I thought I would help if I could. I found some armor in an upper room of the inn, and I began putting it on. Oh! oh! Undine! At that moment he came in. I don't mean

Rembrandt, you know! It was the other, Albrecht—that is his name, I believe—and he saw me there. Undine, I don't know how much of it I had on. Oh, dear! Yes, surely the breastplate was on. Well, as to the rest—Oh! oh! I think I must have put on the greaves! I hope I did, but I am not quite sure. Why will a woman try to fight, anyway? Now, Undine, surely it is not her affair at all, and just see how it has undone me. He came in and I was angry, and he said he didn't know whether I was a man or a woman. I wonder not! Oh, how much of the armor did I have on? I cannot remember. Now, Undine, I have a thought about that man—that German—that he has some strange ideas about me. He said he saw me in Nuremberg. Perhaps he did. I was not half-dressed in armor then, thank God! The man is even handsomer than Rembrandt, and that is saying a great deal. Handsome!—well! I should think he was! You need not think I am in love with him; and yet, of course, you will think that because of my silly talk. Why, Undine, I have hardly talked with him at all; and when he saw me that way at Egmont, I was ready to die from shame. I wonder why he is so handsome. He looks to me like Albrecht Dürer himself. No! he has not the power. Yes, he has—I believe he has; but I know him not, and I couldn't tell you why I talk about him. Oh! Undine, have you heard of the painting of the Civic Guard—Rembrandt's, I mean? That is a *change of subject*; but it is a picture of great men, and Albrecht is great, though, perhaps, not now do people know it. Oh!

AGAIN HILDEGARDE TO UNDINE

I am sure of it. If I had any wit, Undine, I should tear up this letter. It is so confused, and I do not understand it myself. I hope I may meet Albrecht again, and have a chance to talk with him in such a way as to know something of his thoughts. I am not mad, but I believe he thinks I am; and why shouldn't he? Oh, that armor! why did I not have it all on before he came up! I have not seen him of late. I am taking care of Hildebrand, who is still ill; but he is getting better. What is Albrecht doing, I wonder? He will not come to see me because I forbid him, and I didn't want to do that, either—at least, I think not; although, be sure I love him not, nor he me—at least, I think he would have spoken of it if he had loved me, and he never did. Please write to me, dearest Undine. I wait for words from the mother-land. Oh, I am so homesick, so heartsick, and life is dreary here. Holland is flat and it rains. Oh, I wish I were at dear Nuremberg again. Once I get there, not you, nor Albrecht, nor Rembrandt, nor anyone else shall ever see me in armor or half-armor.

Your own sister friend,

HILDEGARDE.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The Soldiers in the Night-Watch are Painted

MORNING in the studio. Rembrandt at work on the sketch of the Night-Watch. It had not been wholly finished, though very nearly. A loud knock at the door, and poor Jan, frightened, as he always was, opened it in spite of his fear.

"Oh, my lord, my lord," for it was Captain Cock, and the poor little fellow ran away as fast as he could.

"What is the trouble with that varlet there? I meant no harm to him. Why did he run away? What ho! there, mynheer! Is there no one who can give me entrance?" The doughty captain's voice was so loud that Rembrandt heard it, although he was working still on the sketch.

"Is there someone there below?"

"There is, indeed. It is Captain Cock, of the Civic Guard."

"Why did they not open the door?"

"They did, and ran away."

"Ah, that must be that rascal, Jan. I know he is afraid of you. I crave your pardon. Will you come here, Captain Cock, for I think it may be that you wish to see the sketch of the Civic Guard picture?"

THE SOLDIERS ARE PAINTED

"Yes, I came to see it. Let me see it, I am hurried this afternoon. I can stay but a little while, but I wish to see it."

"It is here, if you will mount the stairs, and I am sorry to trouble you."

"Oh, I care not a whit for that. Soldiers are not shirkers in mounting stairs, or ramparts either."

The captain's heavy tread resounded through the house as he went upward, and the frightened Jan slunk farther and farther away. He concealed himself in a closet until the warrior had gone.

"Here is the sketch, my lord captain, but I wish you to know it is only a sketch. The real work comes later, when you and your friends have let me put your portraits into the work."

"A sketch! Call you that a sketch, Mynheer Rembrandt? Methinks it is what they call a picture. Ah, I see, you have not painted us yet; but we are there, and you have put me in the very middle. Well, well, Captain Cock will not be forgotten. Thanks, friend artist. When can I come to be painted, as you call it, instead of being sketched?"

"Now! now! if you will. I am free to-day."

"Nay, but I said I was hurried, and that is true; but it was only that I had to meet Heutenburgh, and there were some matters about the Guard guild-house that should be taken care of. Perhaps you might send that frightened varlet, if you can find him, and let him tell Heutenburgh I will come later—two hours later. Will that be time enough?"

REMBRANDT

"Surely you do not mean, Captain Cock, that I could finish your portrait in that time?"

"I know not. How can I know? But I want to be painted just there where you have put me in your sketch, and quickly too, for I like it. Send the varlet. Heutenburgh can wait well enough."

Thus it was arranged. The valiant captain found posing for a picture no easy matter. He could scarce control his impatience. Rembrandt worked with his usual quickness; but, even for him, it was not possible to paint that portrait in two hours. "Captain Cock, I have done what I can for to-day, but you must come again to-morrow."

"Indeed, must I? You are somewhat imperious, Mynheer Rembrandt; and if you are that way with soldiers there might be trouble. I can't see why it takes so long to paint that; and you had it all sketched, as you said before."

"I beg you to pardon me, Captain Cock, but I cannot do what you want in so short a time. I have not skill enough, but I will do it. I know I can do it, if you give me time enough."

"Humph! I will come in the morning, and please tell that varlet to open the door and not run away, the little fool."

"Captain Cock, could you bring the lieutenant with you? I would pose you together. It would be better."

"What! paint him with me? It will take all summer. You cannot finish one without spending too many hours. What can you do with two?"

THE SOLDIERS ARE PAINTED

"Pardon. I can paint the two together better. It would help my work."

"Well, do you want everyone of them, every Dutchman in the Guard? Ah, ha! that would be too much for you."

"They must all come sooner or later; but only you and the lieutenant to-morrow, if it please you, Captain Cock."

In the morning Captain Cock and Lieutenant Heutenburgh appeared at the studio. The lieutenant had not seen the sketch. When he entered the studio and saw the great canvas he said: "How wonderful! for I really see all those Dutchmen there that fought with us. Am I there? Oh, yes! and next to Captain Cock. Go on, Rembrandt! I would be painted there. Yes, there. Did he not say, go out and find the Spaniards, and did not we go? We went. We found them! We killed them! the scoundrels. Yes! let me be there at the captain's side. Captain, I hope I failed you not in that action."

"Indeed you did not."

"I would never fail you, if help were in mine hand to give. But, my friend artist, where are the others of the company?"

"Disturb yourself not at all. They are all coming into the picture, but I have not yet had time to paint them."

"Humph! I think you have not enough place to put them all in, large as is your sketch. They will be angry. Well, well, I care not. Paint me there beside our great captain. The others must take care of themselves."

REMBRANDT

“No! no! lieutenant, I will get them all into the picture, but now stand there if you will. Here just a little behind the captain. Ah, that is it. Now let me paint, if I can.”

The artist went on, and for a time there was perfect silence in the studio; but after an hour of work another member of the Guard came in. He was the ensign-bearer. Like the others, he looked in amazement on the picture. “Wonderful! most wonderful, Mynheer Rembrandt. Yes, I remember, we went out of the guild-house just as you have painted it. Ah, yes! there is the noble captain and the lieutenant, but where am I? Oh, I see; but surely there is not enough space there to paint a man of my size! I am larger than the captain, much larger.”

“Mynheer Ensign, I beg of you to let me finish the picture. This is but a sketch, except for the captain and the lieutenant; I have nearly finished their portraits. Can you wait for a little while, and I will pose you directly behind them?”

“Oh, very well, humph! Behind them? Yes, I see. I will wait, but not too long, sir painter, for it likes me not at all to be put behind! nor likes it me too much to wait.”

However, he did wait, and at last Rembrandt painted the very life of the man into the great picture. This he did with all the others, even if only a head appeared. Each portrait was a masterpiece, but the Dutchmen did not like it. They paid their money for their portrait, each one of them. Why put them in the background? Why show only a head, when they had bodies too, of

THE SOLDIERS ARE PAINTED

which they were very proud? One by one, as they came to be painted, there was from each a word of discontent, and when those farthest away from the foreground had been painted the murmurs became open and loud of fault-finding.

Nevertheless, there were many in Amsterdam who knew well the picture was a great one; but these men who thought themselves slighted were men of influence and power in the city. They would not be painted in that way. No, indeed. What matter if the picture was great, as some said? They would go to Van der Helst and get their money's worth in full-sized figures, and they did. The greatest work Rembrandt had painted up to this time was the beginning of the end of his prosperity. No more commissions came. Many, who before had been friendly with him, spoke not to him when they met him on the street. Another cause for this was his habit of home staying, which grew upon him, do what he would. Saskia was not well. He adored her more and more, and wished to stay with her always. Three children had been lost to them, and grief had overcome the merry maiden whom the painter had so devoutly loved, and did so love even now. Rembrandt's mother had died but a little time before. There had been much trouble. The painter's son, Titus, was born but a little while before the painting of the Night-Watch; and Titus was to be to Rembrandt more than he then knew, though he took great pride in his son from the day of his birth. There were some who stood by Rembrandt. Jan Six remained his friend un-

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til the last day of his life. Often did he come to the studio to see Rembrandt at his work, and often did Rembrandt and Saskia go to his home and enjoy his genial hospitality.

"Oh, Rembrandt," said Saskia one day, "why comes no one here to the house? Why are there not the sitters as there used to be? Oh, what is it, my lord?"

"It is true, my dearest, and yet well knowest thou that I am painting and etching all the time."

"Indeed I know it well; but thy wife cannot be always thy model. Why not go to the asylum, and paint that lovely young girl that you found when the Civic Guard went out against the Spanish conspirators?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Hendrickje's Portrait

THE next morning Rembrandt and Saskia went together to the asylum. Hendrickje was better, owing to the kind care of the nurses. She was still very sad ; but she had yielded to her fate, and no longer rebelled against it. It is the habit of the Dutch to be calm in misfortune. This morning Rembrandt and Saskia met the Zealand maiden in the corridor of the upper story of the asylum. This corridor goes part way about the court, and the view from it, looking as it does upon the great trees in the court-yard, is most pleasant. As they came in, Hendrickje was leaning out of a window, looking at the green leaves and the grass.

“My own,” said Rembrandt, “I will paint her thus. She sees us not nor hears as yet. Wait ; let me see the play of light upon her hair and form. Ah, that is beautiful ! But I must paint it from below—from the court-yard. Disturb her not until I go down again and see her from there.”

Saskia did not move. Hendrickje still stood by the window. Rembrandt quickly found his point of view in the court-yard, but when the young girl saw him she uttered a cry of joy.

REMBRANDT

"Ah, there is my saviour! Without him I would have been dead."

Then Saskia, who had remained in the corridor, said: "Turn to me, sweet maiden, for I would speak a word with you. My husband would fain paint a picture of you just as you stand there at the window. That is why he went down to the court-yard, that he might find a place where he could see you as you are there at the window and paint your portrait. He will make a great picture. He always does. Now, do not mind being painted. It is a little tiresome sometimes, but it is not very bad."

"But, my frow, paint me? Why would he paint me?"

"He paints all whose faces and forms please him; but, afterward, will you come to our house? For some time have I meant to ask whether you would come to us and help in the work of the dining-room and the other rooms beside it."

"Would I come? Oh, would I come! Why ask you, great lady? I am but a simple peasant girl. Would I not be glad to serve you and him in any way? I know not whether I can do what you wish. Please tell me, fair lady, what is it?"

"Why, it is not hard work—just looking after the dishes and the flagons and the great plates, and keeping all neat and clean, especially the carved chairs and the beautiful pictures."

"Pictures? What are they? I know not of them at all. Are they easily broken?"

"Why, little maiden, did I not say but now that Rembrandt, yonder in the court-yard, was about



PORTRAIT OF A GIRL
(HENDRICKJE)

HENDRICKJE'S PORTRAIT

to make a picture of you? Look at him. Soon will you know what pictures are, if you watch him. There is none other who paints as he does. Look, he is making a sketch of you now. How I wonder where he found the paper; he always has crayons with him," said Saskia, laughing merrily.

Hendrickje looked out of the window again, and truly there was Rembrandt looking at her. As she turned back from Saskia and went again to the window, her involuntary posing was what the painter wanted always—the unconsciousness of nature. He found it here, and Hendrickje's first portrait is one of the most beautiful of his works. From the court-yard he called up to her: "Move not, I pray you; I would have it thus. Wait, I beg, for a little time. Soon can I make the sketch."

"Be quiet, Hendrickje," whispered Saskia. "He will finish the sketch in a few minutes." They stood there at the window, Saskia behind Hendrickje, Rembrandt in the court-yard below. It was not long before the sketch was done, and Rembrandt turned from the court-yard to come again to the corridor.

"Then, Hendrickje," said Saskia, "you will come to our home and do what I asked of you?"

"Yes, I will come; but I am afraid of that master there. Did I not hear you call him master, or was it lord? I forget, my frow."

"It might have been either, Hendrickje, for he is both to me; but be not afraid of him. His heart is as tender as that of a little child."

REMBRANDT

"Yes, I will come. Can I come with you now?"

"Yes, yes, as soon as the sketch is done."

In a little time the sketch was finished. Then Rembrandt said :

"Again must I pose you there in the window, dear child ; but now I have what I need until I bring the colors here."

"Oh, mistress, what means he? I must be posed again. Does that mean what I have just done? But I did nothing. Standing there by the window, is that what he meant?"

"Surely," said Saskia ; "but come now, come to our home. We will go together, for the master will not wish to do more to-day."

Rembrandt, Saskia, and Hendrickje went from the asylum to the artist's home. When they came there, Lazarus, the Jew, was seated in the high-backed chair where once he had been before. He was waiting for the painter. His time was coming, and well did he know it. His interest, as he named it, was long overdue. It made no odds if he had charged fifty per cent. It was not paid. As Rembrandt and his wife, with the Zealand maid, came in, they almost stumbled upon the Jew, because the chair in which he sat was so near the door.

Said Hendrickje : "Oh, who is that man? I am afraid of him." She turned toward the door, thinking to run away.

"Come hither, Hendrickje," said Saskia. "This is a friend of my master—a noble Jew, by name Lazarus. He has been our good friend. Fear him not." But the peasant girl was hardly to be

HENDRICKJE'S PORTRAIT

persuaded ; with instinctive aversion she shrank from the Jew, but under Saskia's gentle influence she came at last into the house.

"What do you wish with me, Lazarus? Why wait you here? Methinks it is somewhat unmannerly thus to sit keeping guard, as it were, over my own doorway in my absence."

"Your own doorway! Oh! oh! have you paid for it? Did you pay for the pictures that Lazarus found? No, no. Now, it is time for payment. Have you the money?"

"Lazarus, this is most unseemly. My wife is here ; this young girl is here, and she has never been in the house."

"I am very sorry, but I must have the money. That friend of mine, Isaac, he let me have much of that money that went to buy those pictures hanging there. Look at them. They are great pictures, and you did not pay for them. We paid, Isaac and I ; and they cost—ah! thousands—and we want the money."

"Lazarus, I have it not here at this moment ; but surely I have paid you enough for them."

"Oh, that was only interest. You have not paid one florin."

"Let me go away, my frow Saskia. I am afraid of him," said Hendrickje.

"Go not ; stay where you are. Why should one fear a man like him? Lazarus, you said you were our friend."

"Your friend! Oh! my lady, surely I have not had much speech before with you, my frow Rembrandt. Perhaps you know not what the Jew

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was doing who has really, really been trying to help your fine artist husband there, but he wanted to buy so many things. Nobody could help such a man."

"Hold your peace, Lazarus, or there will be trouble between us. What is your wish? Are you not ashamed to come here in the presence of my wife, and even speak to me of such a thing?" said Rembrandt.

"Now, that may be very well, but I want my money, and Isaac wants his money; and, worse than that, he says I have stolen it, and have given him no interest. Now, it must be paid. He has neither interest nor principal, and has waited long enough. He must have both of them."

"Oh, my frow Saskia! Can I go to some room in the house—some closet, anywhere—if only I can get away from that man. A Jew! Oh! I wonder what is a Jew? I know none in Zealand."

"I know not whether there are Jews in Zealand. But it is not meet that you should speak in this wise, because thou art in the presence of a Jew, and I fear me much he hears what thou sayest."

"Truly, my frow, I am to blame. I hope the Jew will do no harm. Oh! he is still there! I forgot, but he did not hear what I said but now. Oh, let me go away. I never saw a Jew till now, but I want not to see one."

"Now, little maiden, come here to the room where we dine, and I will tell you of your work. That will be better. Rembrandt and Mynheer Lazarus, we leave you now; for there are some matters that must be quickly understood by this

HENDRICKJE'S PORTRAIT

young girl, else will she not be able to do the work for which she has come here."

Lazarus left, saying he would come again on the morrow, but the matter must then be settled in full. Rembrandt went to his easel, but Saskia, alas! went to the bed from which she was never to arise again.

CHAPTER XXXIX

The Death of Saskia

THE merry maiden had been greatly weakened by all her trials. The loss of her children had nearly broken her heart. Perhaps Rembrandt had asked too much of her, in posing for his pictures—such tiring work—hour after hour. She never thought of that. After a few days Saskia sent for a notary. She wanted to make her will. Meanwhile Rembrandt had been making etchings of her, as she lay asleep in bed; and he had made etchings of Jews and beggars to amuse her. He could not have thought she was dying. The notary came. The will was made. All was left to Rembrandt, but he was to care for Titus. Saskia said in this will that she trusted all to her husband. She knew he would do what was right. The great love that had been his since first she had seen him was his to the end. Not once had the wife faltered in devotion; not once had she thought that Rembrandt could fail in any way. And now the death-bed! The lovely woman was passing from earth. She knew it, though Rembrandt did not. Weaker and weaker, fainter and fainter, she grew, in those few days after the will was signed.

THE DEATH OF SASKIA

Rembrandt sat by the bed. He made etchings of her as she lay there, half-unconscious.

"Saskia, see! That is as thou seemest there in the bed. Methinks thou must have been asleep."

She answered not. One of the Jews came to the house, and Rembrandt said: "Sit there; let me make an etching of you. My wife is not well, and I would amuse her." It was done, and Rembrandt took the etching to Saskia's death-bed. The tired, almost unconscious, woman turned her head to look at it. To the very last, one word of her master, her adored husband, would almost bring her to life again.

"What was it, master? oh, my master! What! I do not think I see. Oh! what was it? Something you did for me?" The breath came faintly. The words were hardly heard. "Oh, oh! my own! knowest thou not that I go from thee now?"

"What meanest thou, Saskia?"

"I go, I go away from thee. I am sorry. Longer would I stay here with thee. What is it thou hast there? Oh! a picture for me. Is that the last work thou hast done for thy Saskia? I will see it. I must see it. I would look on thy work until my eyes close."

"My own beloved, my treasure, my inspiration, the joy, the love of my life, thou shalt not go away from me."

"My dear lord, I must go, and the time is short; but soon will I meet thee again."

Her breath came more and more faintly. There was no one in the room but Rembrandt. At last he knew the end had come. He arose and went to

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her. He took her hand in his. "My own! my own! go not away. I knew not of it; but Saskia, my beloved, my true wife, surely thou knowest that I love thee, and that I have always loved thee."

"I know! I know!" she murmured, now very faintly. "Thy love has been my life. Oh, help; I cannot breathe." Rembrandt lifted her from the pillow, but it was too late. With the one word "Master!" she fell back, and lay in the stillness of death. Rembrandt could not understand. He stood by the bed dazed. He passed his hand over his brow, and looked again at the lovely face that had blessed his home. "What has come to me? Saskia dead! Oh, let me die! My own, my own, why didst thou go away from me? Is God cruel? Oh! my Saskia! Mine own Saskia!" He went again to the bed, and took her hand—now so cold—that had always been so warm for him. He sat there holding the cold hand, until he utterly forgot time, nor recked he of it. Saskia was dead. The next morning the little maid came and timidly knocked at the door. The knocking aroused Rembrandt from his stupor. "Yes, come. Ah, there is Saskia there! She moves not. I know she is dead."

Then Hendrickje said: "My lord, we have known long that your wife had died, but we dared not come here. Now we would come. Surely we must take care of the body."

"Oh! the body! Her body! Take care of it? Help me, Hendrickje. I am falling."

It was true. Rembrandt fell in a swoon by the body of the wife whom he had loved as never had

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he loved anyone else in the world. It seemed for a time that the artist would go with his wife, but he did not. He revived at last. Hendrickje had cared for him; she had bathed his head, and the little Jan had done what he could. But when Rembrandt was restored, his first thought was, "Oh, Saskia! that thou shouldst be taken away! Saskia! My Saskia!"

The time for the funeral came, and Rembrandt followed the coffin to the Oude Kerk. Among the heroes of Holland was laid Saskia. Rembrandt staggered away from the church. He could hardly have walked unless Jan Six and Hendrickje had lent him helping hands. At last he came back to the home. "What is to come now? Why live? I care not about living. My Saskia! I would go to thee."

"Nay, Rembrandt, stay and do thy work. Later shalt thou join me."

"Who said that? It surely was Saskia's voice. None other could have said it. I will work, then; there is naught else to do."

"My lord Rembrandt, will it ease you to take something to eat and to drink? It is not well to be without food so long. Let me bring you something. Hardly yet do I know where all is in the great house, but I think I can find something." And thus Hendrickje helped him as she could in the time of his trial.

CHAPTER XL

Albrecht and Lazarus

ALBRECHT came to the church, though Rembrandt knew not that he was there. The young German dared not speak to his friend in the hour of his great grief ; but the next morning he came to the home of Rembrandt, his heart overflowing with tender sympathy.

“ Rembrandt, my dear friend, can I help thee in naught? I have suffered with thee.”

“ Albrecht, I know not whether anything can help me. I am cast down to the very ground. What can I do? Saskia is gone.”

“ I know, I know, dear friend. She is gone, and I dared not come to thee.”

“ Yes, that is well. I could not hear the words of anyone at that time, even of one as dear as thou art to me. Albrecht, what is left? Oh! what is left? Can anything be left after Saskia is gone? Would I were with her.”

“ Rembrandt, I pray thee pause and think. Thou hast yet thine art.”

“ Have I? I had not thought of it.”

“ But, my dear friend, you must work. This seems no word of comfort ; but perhaps the best word I can give from a heart full of love is that still thou canst work, and do something that will

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help thy fellow-creatures here. I know it is a mystery ; I cannot see why our best work should come through suffering, but I believe it is true. Knowest thou not, dear friend, that I am suffering, though little is the work that I have done."

"Suffering? Thou meanest that thy love has not yet come to thee. Yes! that is suffering."

"Rembrandt, thou hast had thy love. Thou hast been blessed. Be comforted. Go on. Do what thou canst. Would that I had my Hildergarde! Would that I had done any work such as thine. But no one has. Thou art a prince in thine art."

"Albrecht! truly dost thou comfort me. That dear one who has gone was the inspiration of my art, if art it is. She would have me go on. In her spirit I will try; but, oh! the agony of parting from her."

"I know, dear friend, but be not dismayed. Let me help thee as I can, for I know thou needest help."

At that moment came a loud knock at the door. Little Jan opened it. It was Lazarus who came, without thought of the painter's sorrow.

Said Albrecht: "What does that Jew here now?"

"I know not. I cannot see him. Wilt thou speak to him, Albrecht, and tell me what he wishes?"

"That will I do, and I am glad to help thee. I thought not that I could; I will see the Jew."

Albrecht went down the stairs and found Laz-

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arus in the hall. He had never seen him before, though he had heard of him.

"You are Lazarus, I am told. Rembrandt is in trouble. His wife is dead. He cannot see you now."

"Ah, wife is dead! But there is money I must have, and Isaac too."

"Who is Isaac?"

"Oh, Isaac is my friend. He lent me money to buy the pictures here for that artist man, and he wants his money."

"Mean you that the pictures in the house have not been paid for?"

"Sure, nothing but interest have we had. The painter did pay some interest; I will show you the account, if you are his friend. Isaac and I, we only want our due, but that we will have. He has not paid for the house, either. There is a large sum due on it, and the time has come when we can no longer wait. It is years since we let him have that money."

"I knew not of this. It is unkind to come here now, Lazarus. Rembrandt cannot see you now."

"But I want my money, and Isaac wants his money."

"Have you no pity on a man who is suffering?"

"Well, we are suffering too."

"Leave this house instantly, or I will myself force you to go."

"You will? But how, now?"

"Jan, open that door; this Jew must go."

The trembling Jan opened the door, and Lazarus, under compulsion of the stern look of the

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German, went. He turned once or twice ; but he dared not face Albrecht, whose wrath made him look like one of the Vikings.

The little maid in the dining-room had heard all their words ; moreover, she knew of the suffering of Rembrandt, and she knew he was alone. " I will help him, if I can ; he saved my life." Timidly she crept up the stair and came to the room where the stricken artist was sitting. As she knocked on the door, Rembrandt said : " Art thou there, Albrecht ? What said the Jew ? "

" Nay, it is not Herr Albrecht. It is only Hendrickje ; but I knew you were in trouble and alone. I would love to help you from loneliness, for that is bad. I know. Oh, my father ! oh, my mother—drowned in that awful night ! And I wished I had been drowned too, but I was not. It would be better to say a word to someone, and not sit there thus. I am afraid."

" What fear you, Hendrickje ? "

" I am afraid. Oh, I know not, but people cannot be alone in suffering. I have heard—no, I will not say it."

" What have you heard, little maiden ? "

" Must I tell ? "

" Indeed, yes ; you could not add to my suffering."

" Well, then, I have heard that some go mad—I think that is the word—if they suffer all alone."

" It is true, Hendrickje ; but it seems you will not let me be alone. Well, it is better. I thank you, little maiden. Where is Albrecht ? "

" Not yet has he come from the Jew ; but I

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think he will be here soon, for I heard him tell the man to go, and I think he forced him out of the door."

At that moment Albrecht came again to Rembrandt's room. At his knock on the door Hendrickje started up, and fled quickly to the floor below.

"Rembrandt! he was here—that Jew, that Lazarus," said Albrecht as he came in. "What hast thou done with him? Dear friend, art thou in his power?"

"I think so; I know not. I am benumbed; I cannot remember. His power, saidst thou, Albrecht?"

"Truly, I said that. What hold has the Jew upon thee? Tell me quickly, for I fear there is danger for thee from him. My heart told me that when I looked into his eyes and forced him from the door."

"Thou forced him from the door?"

"I did, and I will again if need be; but tell me, how is it thus? Can he do thee harm, dear friend?"

"Do me harm, thou sayest. It may be. I cannot think. Yes, it is true, I have not paid all for the pictures and the prints. Thou saidst he wanted the money. I have paid much, but he said it was interest. I never thought about interest. I wonder now, dear Albrecht, whether all the money I have given him is only for what he calls interest. Oh, Albrecht, I fear indeed I am in his power. I have paid him much, but I have no writing from him about our affairs. Woe is

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me! I greatly fear the Jew hath got the better of me."

"Greatly do I fear it, too. No paper, no account, thou sayest?"

"Nay, none."

"Would that I could help thee! dear friend, but I know not how to help. The Jew will come again, and much I fear he will take the pictures and the prints and sell them."

"Take my pictures! Take my prints! He may have them. Saskia is gone. There is no help. What matters anything? Albrecht, I am tired. Leave me. I thank you for your love; but I can neither see nor hear, nor can I think. Let me rest. Let me forget, if I can."

"It would be well for thee to rest. I will go now, and send to thee the little maiden whom I saw below. She will prepare for thee thy bed. Then lie down and sleep, and may God help thee in thy trouble!"

Albrecht went, and, finding Hendrickje still trembling and afraid, told her to go to Rembrandt, and do for him what was needed.

"Yes! I will go, but I am so afraid of the Jew. Oh! will he come again?"

"It may be. I hope not; but go and do what is needed for the great master. He suffers so much that I fear he may die. Do your best for him."

"I will. You are a kind friend. The master loves you, I think."

"I hope he does; but go and help him. Stay here not one moment more."

Albrecht left the house, and went directly to

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the Jew's home, to see if aught could be done to avert the impending catastrophe.

Hendrickje went up to the room where Rembrandt was now sitting in one of the high-backed chairs that he loved, but he had nearly fallen from it. He was half-stupefied, and his head sank to one side. Hendrickje ran toward him. She lifted the half-fallen head. She bathed it with cold water.

"Who is it that does this for me?" said Rembrandt. "Oh! is it indeed thee, little maiden? That is kind, that is sweet. I thought I might die."

Now, Hendrickje's courage and her devotion to the man who had saved her life impelled her to save his, if she could. All timidity, all fear, had gone. With the ardor of a new-born love, she caressed him, she soothed him. At last, beneath her gentle touch, he revived so much that, with the help of Hendrickje's arms about him, he came to the bed, and seemed about to sink into a peaceful sleep."

"I will leave him now. I love him, I love him; I am all his. I wonder if I can help him. What he asks of me will I do. Would I could do more. All would not be enough for such a man, and he suffers. My God, why does he suffer? He is too great to suffer. I know not, I am only a simple peasant; but I know he is great, and I know I love him."

CHAPTER XLI

Albrecht is Happy at Last

THERE was a little time before the Jew came to Rembrandt's house. He was afraid of Albrecht, whose loyalty to his friend made him dangerous if anything threatened Rembrandt. This loyalty of the German had awakened in him a new feeling. Even his love had not thus inspired him. He was ready to give his life either for Rembrandt or Hildegarde. Albrecht had gone direct to the Jew's, and told him in the plainest language what he thought of him. Lazarus cared not. Now he was bent on his money. The time had come to reap his harvest; but the stern aspect of Albrecht, and his demand for a stated account, held back the Jew for awhile. Albrecht left his house and went toward the place where Hildegarde lived. He always went there every evening; but he did not enter, for he felt he was not wanted. In the houses of Amsterdam there is a curious machine for lifting what is needed into the attic story. A strong beam projects from the middle of the gable. Underneath it is a door which opens to the attic. From the street, or the canal, to the upper story of the houses what was needed was hoisted up, and it is done in the same way to-day. As Albrecht neared

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the lodging of Hildegarde, he chanced to see, on the other side of the street, some men who were hoisting an unusually large bale of goods, that doubtless had come from the Indies. He watched with some interest, for it seemed impossible that so large a bale could go into that attic door. It was not wide enough. Albrecht stepped across the street, not knowing that Hildegarde was watching him from her window. The German became interested. "Careful, now; surely you cannot get that in there. Careful, I say." At that moment a little boy, attracted by curiosity, came and stood directly underneath the swaying bale, looking up at it, wondering whether or not it would fall. Albrecht saw it was about to fall. He knew the child would be killed if it fell upon him. With a leap he reached the boy. He threw himself upon him and forced him away. In a quarter of a second, down came the bale, which had broken the rope at the attic door. The child was saved because of Albrecht's quickness and bravery, but Albrecht himself was not saved altogether: for the bale fell upon his leg and badly crushed it. He lay there—the child in his arms. Hildegarde cried: "Come, Wilhelm! Come, Marjorie! Let us help. Quick! Quick! See you not the brave man yonder? He nearly was killed, but he saved a life. Let us help. Quick! I say! Why are you so slow?"

They went across the street, and it was not too soon. Albrecht was in a dead faint, because of the terrible pain from the crushing blow.

"Take the child, Marjorie. What can I do with

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him? I know not. I dare not touch him, for I am afraid of my own heart. Hildegarde! thou art conquered, much fear I; for well thou knowest he loves thee, and perhaps I love him, but I must save him. It matters not. He is a hero. I am willing to be conquered. Help me! Wilhelm! Lift him there, just in the middle of the back. I will take his head." This was done. The beautiful girl knew she had in her arms her lover's head, but she feared he would die. The shock had been a terrible one. It might be that the leg on which fell the bale would have to be cut off. "Wilhelm, run for Dr. Tulp! I would have him here instantly." It was long before the doctor came, because of another lesson in anatomy that he was giving at the meat market. Albrecht still lay in a faint. They had laid him on the bed in Marjorie's room, and Hildegarde was by his side. "Bring water, Marjorie, cool water." Tremblingly the brave Nuremberg maiden stroked the brow of the man she had learned to love. At last Albrecht opened his eyes. He had revived, though he was still in great pain. Hildegarde's face was just above his own, and her hand was stroking his brow. The beautiful face, the brown eyes, the clustering curls, there they were. Even the lovely red lips were not far from his.

"Am I dreaming? Nay! that is my own angel, and she is trying to help me. She never did that before. I wonder why! Oh, it is because I am in pain! There can be no other reason. But she is there, and I am in heaven. I care not for the pain."

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Still only half himself, Albrecht murmured these words. Hildegard heard them. Her quick-beating heart beat still more quickly. It was her lover talking thus, and he was a brave man and a true one.

"I wonder I knew not that he loved me thus. Perhaps I did know something of it, but not much. I would not let him talk to me, because I was mortified. I was to blame. No matter, he shall talk to me now, if he will. May God grant he will! Where is the doctor? Can there be no help? He may die. He shall not. I will save him myself, if the doctor comes not."

But Dr. Tulp did come, and with his usual grave dignity said: "What is needed of me? I am told there has been an accident. Where is the one who has been hurt?"

"Oh, doctor! Come! Please come quickly! He is here. He nearly was killed in saving a little boy."

"I am quite ready to come, but where is he? It might be well that I should see him instantly."

"I know. He is here on the bed. Come." Hildegard led the great surgeon of Amsterdam to Albrecht's bedside. The German, though revived, was still suffering intense pain from the nearly fractured leg. Was it fractured? That was for Dr. Tulp to tell.

"Let me look at once. Ah, yes! Something must have fallen on this. Let me see." As the doctor, with his touch of knowledge, examined the wounded limb, Albrecht groaned, and he said, half-unconscious:

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"Oh, where is that angel that cared for me before?"

Hildegarde, without thought, for once carried away from herself, cried aloud, "I am here! Surely I am here; but I am no angel. I only want thee to live."

"Yes! I will live. I will live for thee. What is the doctor doing?"

"Oh! I know not. Help him, doctor! if you can."

"I will do my best. Help can be given here. The first thing to do is to set this leg in place. It is broken just below the knee. Is there anyone who can help me to hold it while I put on the splints which are needed?"

"Surely! Surely! Wilhelm! come here, and help the doctor. Come quickly."

"I come; what am I to do?" said the faithful servant.

"Help the doctor; that is what you are to do, and be quick about it."

"I will do my best, my lady, though I know but little about such things."

With Wilhelm's help the crushed limb, also fractured, was at last cared for; and Albrecht, who had suffered the pain of the setting together of the bones without a word, lay back on the bed exhausted.

"Will he live, doctor? Will he live?" said Hildegarde.

"Calm yourself, young maiden. Methinks you are somewhat excited. Yes! he will live; but he might not have lived unless such care as was needed had been given."

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“He will live?”

“Why ask you that? Have I not said?”

“Oh, yes, he will! I know it. I thank you, Dr. Tulp.”

“Young lady, I am glad to have been of service to you. What the young man needs now is care and the best of nursing. That, I am sure, he will have. I will come again on the morrow, to look to the bandages and splints. Farewell for the time.”

“Farewell, Dr. Tulp.” The grave doctor left the house. Hildegarde flew back to the bedside. “He must have careful nursing, said the great man. Have it he shall. I will be his nurse.”

Little Albrecht cared for the pain, as Hildegarde sat by him, and soothed him, and ministered to him with the gentleness of a true woman. Even then they were betrothed. Both knew it, though there had been no spoken words of love.

CHAPTER XLII

The Inventory is Made

ALBRECHT could no longer interfere. Lazarus heard of his trouble, and exulted in his mind. "Now I will seek Isaac." He went to the house of his friend.

"Well, what is it Lazarus; have you got good news? It is time we had that money."

"Now, Isaac, give me all the papers you had from me. I go to sell out that Rembrandt. I take with me the man that owns that house. It is only half-paid for. Isaac, my friend, I tell you I sell him out entirely. There will not be one thing left. But, Isaac, it is almost a pity that we charged all up he paid as interest; for it is true that what he paid was enough for the pictures. But he did not pay for the house."

"Never mind what he paid, Lazarus. Get me back my moneys. You know you said fifty per cent."

"Yes, I did, you old usurer. Sometimes my heart misgives me about this matter, but the man must pay. He had his pictures, his prints, his house. Who but the Jew Lazarus helped him to those? He must pay."

"Surely, surely, Lazarus, and quickly, too. Mine coffer is empty. I must have the gold."

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“You shall have it, Isaac. I sell him out at once. I must go to the town-hall and show the papers. There get I an officer who will sell out all he has; but it is a pity.”

“It is no pity. Make him pay. Go quickly, Lazarus, my friend.”

Lazarus went to the town-hall. He found the notary. “I have accounts to settle with that painter, Rembrandt. He has not paid me my debt.”

“Let me see your papers.”

“Here they are.” Lazarus brought out the accounts, which he had himself made, and the notary began to look them over.

“Humph! yes, I suppose that is right, as you Jews make accounts; but it is not enough. If this is all the indebtedness, I will not proceed against him.”

“But it is not all. There is the mortgage on the house. It is only one-half paid.”

“Where are your papers about that?”

“I have them not here, but I will go seek them.”

“It would be better that you did, if you mean me to sell at auction a man’s house, and all in it. Is that what you meant? I can hardly believe that such a course could be taken against so great a man as Rembrandt.”

“Well! I did mean that. He has not paid. I will go find the owner of the house that is not paid for.”

Somewhat crestfallen, Lazarus left the notary’s office, and sought the man of whom he had bought the house for Rembrandt. It was true the money

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was overdue. Lazarus told the man who held the mortgage that he would be ruined if he did not at once sell out the house. "Why, I have so much money due me there that I will sell out all that is inside. I cannot sell the house; but it is better you join me, else you lose much. Come to the notary with me."

"Ah, I fear I must. Rembrandt is in the Jew's hands. He cannot help himself, and I must not lose my money."

It was quickly arranged. When the notary saw the papers, showing the payment on the mortgage overdue, he was obliged to proceed.

"Mynheer Notary, how soon can you send those officers there to make this sale?"

"I will send them to-morrow to make an inventory of what is in the house. That must first be done. The sale will come later, after due notice is given."

"To-morrow, you say? All right. I wait; but be quick, because my friend Isaac wants his money."

"The inventory shall be done to-morrow."

The next day the officer came to make the inventory. Rembrandt was simply dazed when they entered his house. He had suffered much already. The beloved Saskia was gone. The people of Amsterdam no longer cared about him. They came no more for their portraits. What was it that had happened? These officers seemed to him unreal. He could not believe that it was possible to sell those works of art so dear to him, and that loved home in which Saskia had lived.

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The officers asked of Rembrandt about the pictures, and the prints, and the furniture, and what he had paid for them.

"I know not what I paid, but well I know I paid not their worth. They are far more valuable than the sum the Jew would put upon them. Well know I that now, but I thought not of it before. I have played the fool, and now do I find what that means."

"That is very well, but you tell us not the price you paid."

"I told you I know it not."

"Then we must make the inventory ourselves."

Rembrandt wandered from room to room behind the officers. They went to Saskia's room—to his own studio—to the rooms where the students had painted. They went to the dining-room where he had sat with Saskia, and where he had so often etched her. It was a desecration! It was a horror! The artist thought he would go mad, but there was no help. Yes! there was a little help. The peasant girl had known of this. Her adoration of the master had taught her of his suffering, though little she knew why he suffered. At last she saw him almost staggering in the room he loved the most. She came to him and took his hand, saying: "Come! my lord! this is too painful for thee. Come away, until these men have done this dreadful thing. Come! I say, for I see it is more than is possible for you to suffer."

Hendrickje led him to a little room on the second story, of which the officers had already made the inventory. It was one of Rembrandt's favor-

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ite rooms. He sat down in one of the great chairs, and said: "Why care you so much for me? All is gone? I am lost!"

"Nay, my lord, it is not so. There are those who love you. Think of Jan Six. Think of Albrecht von Stoltzing. May poor Hendrickje help a little?"

"Surely, surely, if there is help, thou givest it, little maiden."

"Can I indeed help the great master? I would give my life to help him. He saved it, and it is his."

"If anyone loves me, it helps; but now it seems as if all had deserted me, yet you spoke of Jan Six and Albrecht. It may be they love me still. My heart is sad and bitter. I cannot believe that anyone loves me, or could love me; yet I feel that thou dost love me, for thy sympathy has won my heart."

"Indeed I do." Rembrandt rose from the chair and went to the young girl. He folded her in his arms and kissed her. She embraced him, too, and returned his kiss; for young as she was, she had already loved him long. Even in the midst of this tragedy it was the height of her happiness to love him, and help him, and to know that he would accept her help and her love.

"Come, my lord, there is no longer need to stay here. I heard those officers go. They must have done the dreadful thing they came to do."

"It is only the beginning, Hendrickje. They have numbered and valued, and afterward they will sell, and the Jews will buy. My God! what

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have I done that I should deserve this? But I will go down again. I would see my home once more before it is despoiled."

They went down together, the strong peasant girl half-supporting the painter, who was quite weak from emotion. They went to the dining-room and there sat down. Hendrickje brought wine, and he took some of it, and was a little refreshed. It was the room where he had sat evening after evening with Saskia among his art treasures, and painted her, and sometimes stopped to look at the works of great men all about him. The officers had put labels on every picture, even his own, every chair, every Delft plate, and flagon, every silver drinking-horn, every lovely delicate glass from Venice. All were numbered and valued. Rembrandt shuddered and grew very pale. Even the wine which Hendrickje had brought him hardly kept him from fainting.

"My lord! be not so dismayed. Ah! it is dreadful! but we will care for thee; and thou hast Titus too, and he will grow to be a good and helpful son. I know it."

At that moment the lad came in. He looked at his father in a bewildered way, not knowing what ailed him, but feeling something was wrong; then going straight to him, he put his arms about his neck and kissed him.

"Oh, my son, I thank thee. I will not give way utterly. I will live for thee, and for this maiden here, who says she loves me."

"Why! everybody loves thee, father! Who said anyone did not love thee?"

THE INVENTORY IS MADE

“It was I said it, my lad, but it may not be true. I know it is not true, for here are two who love me. That is enough. I will not lose heart utterly. Go now, my son. Hendrickje, I must eat something more; for much I fear I shall fail in the great strain of the sale, unless I keep up my strength. I must be here, Hendrickje, you know. I must watch the Jews as they sell my house, and I must be strong. I will not yield in the face of those villains.”

“It is well, my lord. I will provide the meal. Rest quiet there.”

Hendrickje served him as she had been wont to do, scarce daring to think of the tender scene that had passed between them. Nor did Rembrandt think of it, for his mind was wholly on the impending sale. The labels were all about him as he sat at his table. He could think of naught else, but the pride in him had been aroused. He would strengthen himself. He would show a bold front to his persecutors. He knew he was beyond help; and he knew, in part, that it was his own fault. If he had listened to Saskia, he would not have had so many works of art; but the Jew was also at fault.

“Ha, by my faith, he is a villain. Why found I that not out before? He has robbed me. I am a fool. I had not the account; I trusted the Jew, and he is a most abominable scoundrel. Would I had left the matter to Albrecht! or even to Hendrik! but, alas! it is too late now. There is no help.”

CHAPTER XLIII

The Home Sold at Auction

A FEW days later, after the notices had been duly given, as the notary had said, the officers came, and the Jew was close behind them. Hendrik came, and Jan Six, both with sad faces. There came also those who had deserted Rembrandt. All his enemies were there; and there came many strangers, attracted by the notices which had been posted about the town. The house was full. When Rembrandt came from his room, pale, but apparently quite calm, he could scarce force his way through the crowd. He meant to go to the dining-room, for there the auctioneer had placed his desk on the dining-table, just at the place where Saskia had been wont to put her plate; and behind the auctioneer already sat Lazarus. There was a big book on the table, in which to record the bids. The holder of the mortgage on Saskia's home sat behind the Jew. At last Rembrandt forced his way in and took his seat at the other end of the table, where he had sat when he was etching Saskia.

Just at that moment Hendrik forced his way through the crowd and came to Rembrandt's side.

“Ah, cousin, this is a sad day, but Hendrik will

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help all he can. His purse is not long, but he will use all there is in it."

"Thanks, kind Hendrik, but speak not to me. I would not be overpowered here in the presence of these Jews who have robbed me."

"I know, I know, Cousin Rembrandt, but they shall not have all. Hendrik can save something, and he will; and he spared the Rhine wine to-day that his head might be clear. Be brave, cousin. All is not yet lost."

There was some comfort for the artist, even at this hour, in the words of his blunt, but kind-hearted cousin.

It was now the hour for the sale. First the house was offered by the auctioneer. Rembrandt quivered from head to foot. His home and Saskia's under the hammer!

"Shame! shame on me! it is my own fault! Oh, Saskia! my darling! I am glad thou didst not see this day! It broke my heart when thou didst go away, but it would have been far worse to be shamed before thee." Rembrandt muttered these words almost aloud. Hendrik caught a few of them and laid his hand on Rembrandt's arm.

"Now, quiet! I pray thee, cousin. What is done cannot be undone. Would I could buy the house. I would give it thee back, but that is beyond me."

The artist sank back in his chair again, still quivering, as bid after bid was noted. The Jew made no bid, because already the price was too high for him. He would make his money on the pictures. He had already his double commission

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on the purchase of the house. The bidding went on for a long time—an age, it seemed to Rembrandt. He who bought it on the highest bid was unable to make good the sum he had offered. All had to be done over again, and the agony was prolonged. At last it was over, and the home belonged to another. He who was sitting at the table there had no longer a right to his place. At the bidding of the owner he must go out into the street, but not yet! oh! not yet! Surely some of the treasures could be kept. Not all that he had loved and lived with was to go at once. It could not be. A deadly pallor overspread Rembrandt's face. Nearly he fainted; but by a strong effort he rallied, helped also by excitement about the sale of the pictures.

“Hendrik, I pray, bid for the Rubens. It is a glorious picture.”

“I know, cousin, but I fear it is too dear for me; but Hendrik will try.”

The Rubens was offered, and the Jew who had sold it to Rembrandt made a bid of one-quarter of the price he had received for it.

Rembrandt started up in his chair, flushed instantly from rage. “Scoundrel! you know what I paid you for it! How dare you, you infernal scoundrel?”

“Would it please the officer to keep silence in this room? I know not what says that man. You offer a picture for sale, I bid a price. It is my right. Keep that man quiet. He might do a harm. He has lost his wits, I think.”

“Alas, you are in the right,” said the officer.

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“There must be quiet here while the sale goes on.”

“But the scoundrel sold me the picture! He has had already more than he bid for it. What insult! What shame! thus to treat great works of art!”

“There must be quiet here, and the sale must go on. It would be better, perhaps, Mynheer Rembrandt, were you to go elsewhere. This is too painful for you.”

“I will not. I will see the fate of my treasures; but I will try to hold my peace, unless the insult is too gross.”

Meanwhile Lazarus whispered to a friend who had come with him. “If there is another bid, go a very little higher. The picture is worth ten times that sum. I will take it off your hands. You know Lazarus.” Hendrik raised the bid a hundred florins. Lazarus’s friend promptly added fifty. Hendrik added another fifty, but that was his limit. There seemed no other there who knew the value of the work, or had the means to pay for it. Lazarus made the last bid, a little over that of Hendrik, and the picture was his. He looked with a mocking smile at Rembrandt, as the auctioneer recorded the sale.

By this time Rembrandt was nearly mad. The insult to the great masters he felt as keenly as though it were to himself. He would surely have rushed upon the Jew had not Hendrik restrained him.

“Nay, cousin, that will not do. It only makes it worse. Thou dost not want to be in prison.

REMBRANDT

Quiet, I tell thee. Wait and see if aught can be saved."

With great difficulty Rembrandt recovered some degree of self-possession. No longer was there pallor on his face. His great eyes were blazing with anger. His fists were clenched. He was dangerous. It was as though his children were being torn from him, one by one, and slain before his eyes, while he stood helpless by. Oh! the pity of it! Oh! the burning remorse! Oh! the impotent wrath! The painter was torn to pieces by conflicting emotions; and at last they exhausted him, and he sank back again in his chair quite quiet, though still flushed and with flashing eyes. When the head of Raphael was offered he could bear no more. There is a limit to human endurance. The hated Jew bid for it.

"God in heaven!" shrieked Rembrandt. "That abominable scoundrel shall not have that divine picture." He leapt up from his chair, and with a strength almost of madness pushed his way through the crowd. He seized the picture and tried to force his way with it toward the front door, but by this time the officers overpowered him. They took the picture from him, and forced him toward the door.

Hendrik had followed as quickly as he could; but the crowd was excited, and it was difficult to press through. However, he reached Rembrandt soon after the officers had forced him into the hall.

"It is better you should go, cousin. This is too painful. You are not yourself, nor can I help you. I cannot bid against these accursed Jews."

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“Go? Go where? There is no place. I have no home, no pictures, no wife. Good God! have mercy!”

At this moment Hendrickje, who had been watching the man she loved from a little room behind the dining-room, came toward them.

“It is well that my lord should go. I will go with him. He will die or go mad if he stays here.”

“Ah! is that thou, sweet maiden? I will go anywhere thou sayest; but where! oh, where?”

“I have thought of that, my lord. There are rooms for thee at an inn. Thou wilt be cared for; and I told the maid to have Titus ready to go. Yes, he is there. What remains to thee of thy goods will be sent after. I have cared for that.”

“Hendrickje, thou art kind, indeed. I know not why thou carest for me thus, but I will go. Friend Hendrik, lend me thine arm, for I am weak and tired, but I must go hence.”

The kind cousin and the loving maiden helped the heart-broken artist from his home. The lad and the maid followed. Rembrandt looked not back. The door of his home was shut to him. The treasures that he loved had been taken. There was naught but the inn, and the love of these who loved him even unto death.

CHAPTER XLIV

Hildegarde Finds Rembrandt

ALBRECHT'S recovery was slow. It takes time to knit together broken bones, even with a Dr. Tulp to help. However, the young German seemed far from impatient. In fact, he wished the bone would take all the time possible in its effort to get strong again. So long as Hildegarde ministered to him, all else was forgotten. Hildegarde was indeed a princess, and a haughty one; but now she seemed like a very lowly maiden, though an exquisitely beautiful one. She did for Albrecht what never had she done for a man or woman before. Every wish she seemed to know before it was uttered. Every pain he felt, she shared. She waited upon him, almost grudging the time for necessary sleep, when she had to give way to Marjorie. Sometimes, under her soothing care, Albrecht would doze a little, and then wake, and, seeing her beautiful face still near, would think it a dream, and then sink into a deep sleep, wishing to dream again. Then Hildegarde would look upon him and murmur, half-aloud: "How grand he is! Perhaps he will be another Dürer. Who can tell? Artist he is, and hero too, and lover. Ah! my heart, cease beating thus! Was ever lover such as he? Surely he has earned his

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reward. I would kiss him now, but I might wake him, and that would be bad ; yet fain would I kiss him. Methinks he would not reprove me for such an awakening. Nay ! I will not. A while ago thou thoughtest thyself a man almost, and now art thou far too much a woman. Be womanly, then, at least, and lose not thy dignity, lest he despise thee. Nay, I will kiss him not."

Albrecht slept long. In his dreams had been always his beautiful lady-love ; but this time had appeared also the face of Rembrandt, wearing a strained, an almost deathly, expression. He awoke with a cry that frightened Hildegarde.

"Oh ! what is it, Albrecht ?"

"I know not ! I know not ! Was Rembrandt here ?"

"Rembrandt ? Nay, thou hast been dreaming. Calm thyself."

"But something has come to him. I know it. Hast thou heard aught ?"

"Nay, nay, rest, or thou wilt do thyself a mischief."

"But I must know. I am sure there is much amiss. I saw his face. He is in grief. Find out for me what it is, dearest Hildegarde, or I cannot rest."

"I will indeed. I will ; only be quiet. If thou art unrestful, harm may come. Thou knowest the doctor said that."

"Yes, I know. I will not fret ; but wilt thou find out as soon as may be ?"

"That will I do, but I pray thee be quiet."

"I will be quiet, only leave Marjorie within call."

REMBRANDT

I need naught. I think I am nearly well, but I can call her if aught is needed. Go thou, I beg of thee, and find what has come to my friend."

Hildegarde gave directions to Marjorie who could now be spared from attendance upon Hildebrand; for he was convalescent and able to care for himself in his own room, though he went not out of the house as yet. He knew naught of the presence of Albrecht in the same lodgings; for their rooms were far apart, and nothing had been said to him of the accident for fear of exciting him.

Marjorie came and sat in the room next to Albrecht's; and then Hildegarde called Wilhelm and told him to go with her, as she had somewhat to do without. The old servant was soon ready, and together they took their way toward Rembrandt's home. Hildegarde blushed as she knocked on the door, for she remembered in what guise she had last been there.

The door was not opened by little Jan, but by a strange servant. He seemed like the apprentice of a shoemaker, for he had on a leathern apron, and his fingers were covered with wax. Hildegarde started. "Who can this be?" she thought. "Surely Albrecht was in the right. Something serious has happened here." Aloud she said:

"I seek Rembrandt. Will you tell him I have a message to him from Albrecht von Stoltzing?"

"Rembrandt? Rembrandt?" said the boy, scratching his head. "I know him not. He lives not here. My master lives here. He came here not long ago. There was someone here be-

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fore. It may have been Rembrandt, but I know naught of him."

"Rembrandt lives not here? Then, where is he? Tell me, quickly."

"But I told you, mistress, I know naught of him; but come in and sit you down. I will ask my master. Perhaps he knows."

Hildegarde entered the vestibule, and again started back affrighted. Not one of the beautiful pictures was there. The carved chairs were gone. She entered the hall. That, too, was bare, except for some simple and homely pieces of furniture, barely enough for comfort. Hildegarde was as one dazed.

"Why! he has moved away," she thought, "and he never let Albrecht know. Nay, but how could he, for he knew not where Albrecht was? But why should he go? I am trembling. Something awful has happened here."

Just then the boy returned, and said:

"Nay! mistress, my master knows not where Rembrandt went after his house was sold."

"Sold, did you say? Rembrandt's house sold? When was that?"

"I know not. I am a boy. I was not here. How should I know? I know my master lives here, and it is his house. He said that. I have to go back to my work. I can tell you no more, nor can my master."

With bowed head Hildegarde went out, and joined Wilhelm, who was awaiting her without.

"Wilhelm, this is no longer Rembrandt's home. It has been sold, and everything in it has been sold,

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I believe, for naught remains, so far as I can see ; and they know not where the great painter is. That is most strange, but I must find him. I dare not go back to Herr Albrecht until I know. Where shall I go? Ah! let me think." She paused a moment, then said, "I have it! The burgomaster, Jan Six, he would know. I remember Albrecht told me that Jan Six loved him, and while other friends had deserted him Jan Six remained true. Let us go to the town-hall. It is likely we may find the burgomaster there."

They went accordingly, following the same narrow streets through which Rembrandt himself had followed her long before, until she threatened to call out the Guard on him. It was now her part to follow him, and she meant to find him. The will of this German princess was not to be balked, and she would not stop until she had achieved her object. They reached the town-hall, and, as it happened, there was then a meeting of the burgomasters. It was most unusual to interrupt such a meeting by reason of any private business; but Hildegarde was impatient, and would not be stopped. She finally induced the astonished bailiff who stood at the door without to take for her a message to Jan Six, saying that she desired to see him for a moment on an affair of most urgent importance.

"I give not my name, because he knows it not; but he will come if you will tell him the matter concerns his friend Rembrandt."

The bailiff, carried away by the beauty and imperiousness of the young woman, did as he was

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bid. The result was as Hildegarde had foretold. Jan Six came forth with a most troubled look upon his noble face. He started back in astonishment as he saw the exquisite girl who had come, as he supposed, from Rembrandt, but immediately he bowed low and said, "What is this about my friend Rembrandt? What have you come to tell me?"

"Knew you not, my Lord Burgomaster, that his home was sold?"

"Alas! Yes! well knew I that. Why came you hither to tell me that? I thought you brought some ill tidings that I had not heard."

"Oh! sir, pardon! I came to ask if you knew where he had gone, for I could not find out at the house; and I have a friend, I mean a friend of his, who would know what has come to him and where he is, and my friend, his friend, is ill, and he must know at once. Please tell me, Lord Burgomaster."

"Ah, I see, this friend must know at once; and surely he has a messenger who does his errands well and faithfully. Poor Rembrandt has gone to the inn, Schuurman's inn, in the Kalverstraat. Know you the place?"

"Ah, yes, I know. They have sales there sometimes, do they not?"

"They do, indeed. The name of the inn is the Imperial Crown."

"I thank you, my Lord Burgomaster. May I now take my leave? I crave your pardon for thus intruding upon your affairs of state; but the sick man had to know, and I dared not go back to him

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until I had found what had befallen his dear friend Rembrandt."

"Ah, you must mean the German, Albrecht von Stoltzing. I wondered where he was in this time of his friend's trouble. He has been ill, you say?"

"Yes, indeed, my lord, very ill, but he is better now. Indeed, I must hasten, for he is impatient, and that is not well for sick folk."

"Surely, go then. I am glad to have been of service to you, and I congratulate the German on having so fair and faithful a messenger."

Hastily, and in some confusion, Hildegarde left and went with Wilhelm direct to the inn of the Imperial Crown.

"Does Mynheer Rembrandt lodge here?" said the impetuous maiden to the surprised innkeeper.

"Yes, truly. He has been here a little time."

"I would like to see him at once."

"Indeed! and what name shall I give him, for he keeps his room and sees but few?" Aside he said: "Methinks anyone would be glad to see a creature so beautiful as you are."

With a little hesitation Hildegarde said: "I do not believe he knows my name, but you may tell him it is one who comes from his friend, Albrecht von Stoltzing."

"I will tell him. Kindly wait here a moment." He offered her one of the carved chairs, of which the inn was full. It was not long before he returned, saying Rembrandt would see her; and she went up to the artist's room.

The painter had risen from his chair before an

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easel, on which was a half finished picture, and he came toward her with somewhat of his former princely manner; but Hildegarde saw in a moment that he was broken. The lines of suffering were on his face.

"I greet you, fair lady. Ah! I have seen you before, but I know not where. You come from Albrecht. Tell me what has become of him?"

"I am Hildegarde von Lebenthal. I am a German lady, and I know your friend Albrecht well. He has been very ill. He had an accident. A bale fell on him as he tried to save a little boy's life; and his leg was fractured, and he has been long unable to move. He bade me tell you; and he wanted to know how it was with you, for he had dreamt some evil had befallen you."

"Ah! that is why he came not to the sale. I understand. I knew his heart was true. How is it with me, he would know? Tell him my home is sold, and all my pictures. I am friendless and weary. No, not quite friendless; there are two or three in the world who yet care for me, but I am sick at heart, and I fear my days are numbered. Nevertheless, tell him I am still trying to paint; and there is some consolation in my beloved art, and there are those who care for me—kindly ones. I am not altogether lonely, though I am dazed and bewildered; and sometimes I cannot even paint, because of a kind of numbness that comes over me."

"Must I tell him that? Oh, master, surely I know you will paint again. No grief, however terrible, can destroy the wondrous art which is

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your most precious gift. Be comforted. Albrecht will come as soon as he can walk, and that will not be long now. I must go to him, for he is all impatience to hear news of his dearest friend."

"Go then, fair lady, but come again. Come with him when he comes, for I would fain look once more upon that winsome face of yours. It is like sunshine, when the sky clears after a storm."

"Indeed, sir, you have not lost your courtliness. Gladly will I accompany Albrecht, when he is able to come hither."

Hildegarde took her leave and, with Wilhelm, went directly to the lodgings. On the way she was revolving in her mind how much she dared tell Albrecht of the dreadful things she had heard and seen. She greatly feared to excite him, and yet she knew he would insist on knowing all the truth. Perhaps it was idle to attempt concealment; but it was an awful story to tell a man not yet well, and who had suffered as Albrecht had.

She went straight to his room. He was sitting up in his bed. His cheeks were flushed with excitement. He had waited long, and could not imagine why Hildegarde returned not sooner from her errand.

"Ah, there art thou at last!" he exclaimed. "What is it? Tell me. Fear not. I know it is bad news. My heart tells me that, but I am strong enough to bear it. I am nearly well now, dearest Hildegarde."

"Nay, that art thou not; but I will tell thee, for I see thou wilt know. It was long ere I could find

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him, for he lives no longer in his home. It has been sold."

"Sold! saidst thou? Hildegarde, art thou sure? Ah! I see—the Jew! My heart misgave me, but I did not think it would come to that."

"Indeed, yes! it is sold, and to a shoemaker. His apprentice opened the door."

"By all the saints, what horror! Rembrandt's home sold, and to a shoemaker!"

"I fear it is worse than that, if worse could be. It seems that all the pictures, and the prints, and even the furniture, were sold too. They were not in the house, and they were not in Rembrandt's room at the inn. Much I fear the Jews have them, though I know it not exactly."

"Is this my delirium, Hildegarde, or dost thou indeed say true? Rembrandt in a room at an inn, saidst thou, and all his pictures and prints sold, and even his furniture? Saidst thou that, or have I dreamed it?"

"I said it, dear Albrecht, for I saw thou wouldst know the truth."

"And I, his dearest friend, was not there to help. Oh, what cruel misfortune! What must he think of me?"

"Surely it was not thy fault. I have told him all, and he blames thee not."

"Thou sawest him, then? How looked he?"

"Not well. He seems broken; but he bade me tell thee there were still some who loved him and cared for him, and he would see thee as soon as thou couldst come."

"Come? I will come now. Why linger I

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here? I am well. I have stayed here so long only because of thine own sweet self. I could not forego the tenderness of thy ministrations; for I knew there must be love in thine heart, else would they not have been so tender. I fear I have neglected my friend; but it was for love of thee, my own. Wilt thou love me in thy turn, although I have been selfish?"

"Thou hast not been selfish. Thou knowest not how serious was thy hurt. Thou shalt not blame thyself."

"Nay, but thou dost not answer me. If thou lovest me, come hither, my princess, and kiss me."

"It is true. Thou knowest I am all thine own. I will come." In a moment her arms were about him. He pressed her to him, and their lips met in love's first long kiss.'

"Oh, my beloved, I am well. I am strong. I will arise. I am a man again for thee; and I would help him, too. Let me not forget my friend in this sweetest hour of my life."

"It shall be as thou sayest, best beloved; but, oh, be careful. Much I fear thou are not yet as strong as thou thinkest."

"I am, indeed. I am as strong as twenty men, thanks to thy dear love."

It was true. Albrecht was soon quite himself again. Indeed, he seemed stronger than before. There was a flashing of the eye, an ardor of the mien, that made one quite forget the dreamer who had come somewhat listlessly to Amsterdam so long before.

CHAPTER XLV

A Wedding in St. Sebald's Church

THE next morning Albrecht and Hildegarde set forth for the inn of the Imperial Crown. In the first flush of his love the German was not selfish, nor was the noble maiden whom he loved. Together they went to seek the stricken artist, and help him if they could. Both these generous hearts beat high in the hope of helping him whom both revered and one loved intensely. They came to the inn. The innkeeper recognized at once the beautiful maiden—no one could forget Hildegarde.

“Ah! you come again, and it is Rembrandt you will see, I deem? But who is he? I cannot tell whether the master will see him.”

“Quiet, I pray thee,” said Hildegarde. “This is the master’s dearest friend, Albrecht von Stoltzing. Go quickly. Tell that name. It will be enough.”

The innkeeper went to the artist’s room and did as Hildegarde had said. Rembrandt was painting, as always. He started from his easel, flung open the door, nearly overturning the burly innkeeper who was in the way, and rushing to the landing cried, “Come up—come up quickly, my friend, my dear friend!”

Albrecht at once began mounting the stair.

REMBRANDT

Hildegarde followed a little timidly, and a good deal behind. "It is better I should give them time to greet each other," she thought. That she did. "A friend again! a friend at last! Oh, Albrecht! where hast thou been? But, nay, I know—I have been told."

"Would God I had been with thee in the time of trial! Some evil deity has separated us, both in thine hour of joy and sadness; but my heart was always with thee. Surely thou knowest that, Rembrandt?"

"Yes, truly, indeed do I know; but where is that fair messenger of thine who told me of thy troubles? Methinks she took deep interest in what had befallen thee."

"Ah! Thou meanest Hildegarde. Why she was here but now. I thought she entered with me. Where is the maiden?" Albrecht opened the door, and there was his lady sitting on the landing, laughing merrily at being thus forgotten.

"My own! why didst thou not come in with me? I fear thou hast shamed me in Rembrandt's eyes, for he will deem it unmannerly that I did leave thee without."

"But thou didst not. 'Twas I that left myself. Methought it would be well to give you two time for your greeting; but, by my faith, ye have been unconscionably long about it, and I am cramped with sitting here on the stair. Oh! Ah! I am lame, I fear. I shall make but a sorry appearance before the master."

"Now Hildegarde, dearest, art thou really troubled? Nay, it is thy jest. I see it in thine

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eyes. Come now, for Rembrandt would see thee."

"Oh! yes, I will come, but thou shouldst have a little sympathy. I must limp just a little, if only to save my good name for truth-telling."

"That shalt thou not do, for indeed well I know no harm has come to thee; and yet I repent me of my selfishness in leaving thee there so long. Nay! come now, beautiful lady. Mock me no more. Let the stricken Rembrandt see thee in all thy loveliness. Surely that is enough to cure all mortal ailments."

"As thou wilt. I suppose I am no longer my master—mistress, I meant. I used to say master, thou knowest, when I wore armor, but it should be mistress now."

"Nay, it should be Queen, and naught else. Come, and let Rembrandt see thee."

They entered the room where Rembrandt had been waiting during this talk, and wondering what had become of them.

"Ah! there is the fair messenger, the faithful messenger. Methinks thou art fortunate, Albrecht, my dearest friend. Mistress Hildegard! I greet you. Ah! that day in the studio, when a young man would not let me paint his portrait."

"Speak not of that, I pray," said Hildegard, "else will I go directly."

"Nay, but why? You came on a good errand, and the disguise was necessary; but beauty cannot be disguised. I knew there was some strange charm in that would-be young man."

REMBRANDT

"I pray you to be silent," said Hildegarde, blushing deeply.

"I will not be silent, fair lady, for fain would I tell you of the devotion of this young man."

"Nay, sir, but I know all that. He has told me himself, and far too much."

"Indeed! indeed! too much, you said? I think not. Your face tells a different story. From a study of it, I should judge that a good deal more of that same devotion would be by no means unwelcome. Ha! there is a blush. Pardon! I beg. I meant not to offend, but I rejoice in my friend's joy."

"Rembrandt," said Albrecht, "I pray thee cease thy bantering. Seest thou not the maiden is confused? But it is true that we are betrothed."

"I am thankful for that, and I trust the marriage comes hard after the betrothal."

"There has been no word of marriage yet," said Hildegarde, starting up and threatening to leave the room.

"Nay, come hither, fair lady. After betrothal needs must come marriage. Blush not, for indeed you must face it out, and with a bold front too. Now, Albrecht, what thinkest thou of St. Sebald's, in Nuremberg? Never saw I the ancient church, but often have I heard that the beauty of it is wondrous. I remember now. Saidst thou not it was there that first thou sawest this lovely face that has bewitched thee?"

"Indeed it was, dear friend."

"Then there shall ye two be married. Rembrandt says it, and Rembrandt loves you both.

A WEDDING

There now, go, for I must paint again. See, the picture is drying, and I cannot wait longer."

"But, dear friend, who will care for thee when we go?"

"Now, that is a pretty question. Hast thou been caring for me of late? Well I know thou wouldst have done so, but thou couldst not. Nay, my art will care for me, and then there are those who love me. I have my son, thou knowest, and there is Jan Six. Fear not for me. Go and be happy, and may God bless you both."

They went. Hildegarde, with downcast eye, bowed head, and cheeks aflame with blushes, would say not one word all the way back to the lodgings. Rembrandt's bluntness had somewhat affrighted her; for her womanhood was now in the ascendant, and it was a very sacred and precious thing. Nevertheless, there was a secret joy in her heart as she thought of St. Sebald's Church, in her beloved Nuremberg, and of what might happen there. As to Albrecht, his heart beat high with passion. Already were the portals of the church where first he saw her opening to admit her as his bride. Already were the tones of the wedding-music floating to his ears adown the columned aisles.

"Hildegarde, adored one! shalt it be there, as the master said—there, in the church of sainted Sebald?—there where first thy divine face bewitched me?"

Hildegarde lifted her head and looked him full in the eye, meeting his passion with an equal one. "It shall be there, my own! my knight! my king!

REMBRANDT

There shall thy Hildegarde give thee what is really thine already."

And so it was. In a little time they left Amsterdam and the wedding-music floated in truth among the arches and about St. Sebald's shrine; and afterward they dwelt in Nuremberg for a long time in such happiness as only those who truly love can know.

CHAPTER XLVI

Help for Rembrandt

AFTER Albrecht and Hildegarde left, Rembrandt went again immediately to his easel. He was painting a scene from the Bible, and the picture was wonderful in conception and execution. Not all his troubles had made the master's hand tremble, or in the least dimmed his eye, because art was his life. In a moment he had forgotten everything save the picture; but when the evening came on, and at last he could not see, the palette and brush fell from his hands, and he said, wearily, "Oh! where is she? Why am I alone? I am weary because I can paint no more. What else is to do? Oh! where is she? That lovely peasant maid who said she loved me. If she loves me, why comes she not? Let her come and comfort me! She did comfort me before, in the day of my awful trial. Why comes she not, I say? She is beautiful. She is lovely. I would see her again. I need her in my art. I need her for myself. Where has Hendrickje gone? She said she loved me. I know she did; but this is not love, to desert me thus."

But Hendrickje came not, and Rembrandt was still alone. He sent for a large lamp, and by its bright light began preparing a plate for an etch-

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ing. Soon he was quite absorbed in his work. But sometimes he would start up as though looking for something. Saskia was in his thought. She had always sat near him as he etched, and not even his absorption in his art could wholly banish the thought of her. At last he grew weary. It was late in the evening. The exquisite etching was complete, and the artist saw that it was good. He loved it, but still he was lonely. Absorbed as he was in his art, he needed some warmth of human companionship. He could not live quite alone. Above all, he needed near him the beauty of woman. Without that his heart languished. "Oh! what shall I do? I am aching with loneliness," he murmured, as he tossed on his pillow. "I know not, but sure I am I cannot live thus." Thus thinking, he fell asleep at last, after hours of weary restlessness. And thus went on the days and the nights, many of them, and still Hendrickje came not. Titus came, and comforted his father as well as he could; but the maiden was deterred, because she feared herself on account of the great love that was in her. At last, Titus came to her one day and said, "Hendrickje, my father has asked for thee. He wonders that thou comest not to him, and he is very lonely."

"Ah! he asked for me? I will go. I will go directly, Titus. Saidst thou he really wanted me?"

"I said it. Go to him. Comfort him, if thou canst; and, indeed, I believe it is in thy power."

Without further words, Hendrickje went to the inn and sought Rembrandt's room. He was paint-

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ing, as always; but as she entered he started up from the easel and went toward her eagerly.

"Hast thou come at last? Thou didst say thou lovest me. Yet hast thou kept away from me this long time. There are not many who love me. Thou shouldst not have stayed afar off. Why didst thou thus?"

"Oh! my lord, I know not. Perhaps I was afraid."

"Afraid of what? Ah! I know, afraid of the power of thine own beauty. Hendrickje, thou art indeed lovely. That form of thine is like one of those graces that the immortal Raphael painted."

"Nay! talk not thus, my lord. I am not beautiful. I am but a simple peasant maiden."

"Beautiful art thou in truth, and I love thy beauty. Hendrickje, give me that loveliness of thine! Come to me, and leave me no more! Come to my arms! Let me caress thee! Love me! love me! Leave me no more!"

"Even as thou wilt, my lord. Hendrickje is all thine. Do with her as thou wilt. She will rejoice in whatever thou doest, for she longs to serve and love thee."

In a moment Rembrandt folded her in his arms, and kissed her lips again and again.

"I will never let thee go. Thou hast said thou art mine. I answer, I am thine. Unclasp not those soft arms. Remain here ever, next to my heart."

"I will, my lord, nor did I think life had for me such joy. In thine arms would I live and die."

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Thus Hendrickje gave herself without a thought, save of her love, to the great man whom she had long adored. She left him no more until the day of her death. She gloried in loving him, and doing his bidding.

But why was there not a marriage? Rembrandt was so utterly absorbed in his art and his passion, that he thought not of it at all. It was enough that he was loved and comforted, and could paint again with ardor. With eagerness he painted from the new model. The exquisite beauty of her form was a fresh inspiration to his brush. His art was again all aflame; and more and more completely did he forget all, save that and his passion for the beautiful girl.

And so passed many months and years, and there was in them much joy; but, on Hendrickje's part, there were many misgivings about the master. Soon she saw that he could not be trusted with money. Though Hendrickje could yield to her passion with complete self-abandonment, yet she had a shrewd mind and was careful about money matters, like almost all Dutch women. Rembrandt had ruined himself once; and it was certain he would do so again, if he were allowed to handle the money that came from his pictures and etchings. Hendrickje resolved that her lord should never suffer again as he had suffered at the auction. She saw plainly that the absorption of his art grew upon him. In that he was still the greatest master. In all other things he was like a child. The art-idea had fairly possessed him at last, to the complete exclusion of all that



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was outside of it, save his passion for herself. She had many and anxious talks with Titus, who knew his father's weakness as well as she did. Young though he was, his love taught him to understand the father whom he adored.

"Hendrickje," he said one day, "I have a thought that I would tell thee. Thou hast comforted my father, and I thank thee for it, and I love thee; but more than comfort is needed. Thou and I must help. Now, my thought was this. Why can we not open a print-shop, like that of Hendrik, and sell all that father paints or etches? Then we take the money, and give him what he needs for his support; and he shall agree to sell nothing save through us. What sayest thou, Hendrickje?"

"It is a good thought, dear Titus. Well know I something must be done. Thinkest thou it will humiliate the master to place him in such a position? He is proud, thou knowest."

"Nay, Hendrickje, he thinks but of his art and thee. He will not care. Give him a place where he can paint, and give him thy love—he will ask naught else. Thou and I will care for him, and see to it that his genius is free to soar as it will without thought of these sordid matters with which his mind cares not to dwell; nor does it do well when it dwells there. Those things hinder him. Seest thou not, Hendrickje?"

"Indeed! I see only too clearly. Wilt thou speak to him, Titus? I dare not. I fear he would doubt my love, if I spoke to him in such wise."

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"Thou art in the right, Hendrickje, though never could he doubt thy love. But I will speak. It is my duty as his son; and I will speak now, for there is no time to be lost. Yesterday did I see him buy a print at a great price with the proceeds of his last picture."

"Alas! I feared it. He has never money to pay the innkeeper. He tells me not what he does with it, but I have seen some prints he has bought. It cannot go on thus, Titus. See him, I beg of thee, and tell him of this plan. I believe it is for the best, and I will help thee all I can. Indeed, it must be done, or there will be another tragedy. I am trembling at the very thought of it."

"I will come on the morrow. Go now, dear Hendrickje, and say naught to him of this. Leave that to me."

"Thou art indeed a faithful son. Thou lovest him most dearly, and I adore him. Between us, Titus, surely we can make these years of his life calm for his art, which must shine like the sun which it is."

"Indeed we will. It is our duty. The world must not lack the fruit of his genius. I will come on the morrow, as I said. Farewell, dear Hendrickje."

Hendrickje left him and went back to the studio, where she found Rembrandt painting with his accustomed absorption. In the evening he made an etching of her, and a very beautiful work it was; nor was there lack of loving talk as the work went on. Nevertheless, Hendrickje's

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heart was heavy within her as she thought of the morrow, and what seemed to her the humiliation of the master. With a groan she said to herself, "It must be. He cannot help it. He knows naught but his art and his passion."

CHAPTER XLVII

How Titus Opened the Print-Shop

ON the morrow Titus came to his father. He came with a heavy heart. His mission was a sad, nay, a tragic one, and he scarce knew how he would be met. Yet he was guided by the deepest, the most unselfish love, and he felt he could not go amiss.

As he entered the studio Rembrandt was resting for awhile. He had just finished a picture and was looking lovingly upon it.

"Is that thyself, Titus? Glad, indeed, am I to see thee. Does all go well?"

"Yes, father, I think so; but there is something of which I would speak to thee."

"Ah! Thou must mean this portrait. Look, Titus! Is not the very life there? Methinks I have never done so well before."

"Truly, it is a masterpiece. All thy works are masterpieces, father."

"Nay, but this is better. Seest thou not there is more warmth in the tone. Methinks since Hendrickje came to me, not only my heart, but my brush has been warmed. Look, Titus—look at these golden tones."

"Father, indeed they are most beautiful. They are wonderful; but I must tell thee why I came, and what I have to say to thee."

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"Thou lookest somewhat serious, my son. I trust thou hast no ill tidings."

"Nay, father, I will tell thee now. There are two in this world who love thee enough to give their lives for thee. One is thy son; the other is thy love. Hendrickje and I have talked together, and we thought it would be well if we opened a shop for the sale of prints and pictures. Now, father, we could not prosper unless we had the sole sale of all thy works. I have come to ask thee if thou wilt agree to let everything that thou dost paint or etch be given to us for sale, and we will render thee account of the proceeds; and surely thus wilt thou have what is needed to keep thee in comfort, and enable thee to work out in peace those works which are making the world rich."

"What sayest thou, Titus? Thou and Hendrickje are to take the moneys for my works! Surely, my son, that is very strange! Surely I should be able to take care of what is mine own!"

"Oh! yes, father, but think a moment. Do something for us. Seest thou not? Our art-shop will be a great one, if we alone can sell Rembrandt's works."

"Ah! yes! I see. But the moneys all to be in your hands, saidst thou?"

"Yes, father, indeed I said that. It is better so, for thee."

"But why—why, I say? Will ye give me money to buy my prints and pictures?"

"Father! dear father! thou needest them not. Thine own are better than any of the others. Keep such as thou wilt to ornament thy room, but let us

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sell the rest. Father! believe me, it is best ; and I will work for thee, and so will Hendrickje. We will give our lives to thee, and thou shalt be at peace, and never shall there be another auction."

"Ha! speak not of that! I tremble at the very thought. It nearly killed me, Titus. It is cruel to speak of it."

"Perhaps I spoke in haste, adored father, but it was because of love. I knew thou wouldst not wish to suffer thus again, and for this reason do I beg. Let us care for thee. Surely, father, thine art is so vast a thing that there is room for naught else in that great mind of thine ; nor would there be room for aught else in the mind of any. Lay down thy cares, father. Let us carry them for thee ; and thou shalt paint, and etch, and be great and happy."

"Titus, perhaps it would be better. Methinks I have been buying some prints even now. Ah! let me show you. There is one I bought yesterday. I meant not to show it to thee, for I spent all I had to buy it ; but it is worth a thousand times what I paid. Look !"

Rembrandt went to a cupboard, and brought out the magnificent print which he had just bought.

"Is it not wonderful, my son? Oh! how I love it!"

"Yes, father, indeed it is ; but thine own works are more wonderful. How can I say it?—but I must. The landlord's money is due, and thou hast not wherewithal to pay. I will not see thee on the streets again. It shall not be. Nor will Hendrickje suffer thus again. She loves thee too

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much. I pray thee, do as I say. Thou canst then be at peace, and loving care will always surround thee."

"Oh! well, my son, this is a strange thing that thou dost propose; but, after all, why should I resist? Only pride and self-indulgence stand in the way, and I really care only for the painting. What matters it? Be it as thou wilt, my son. I ought to thank thee, I suppose, and thank also that dear Hendrickje, who has been so true to me; but it is hard to forego my prints. Oh! Titus! thou wilt let me have a print sometimes, if there comes enough of money from my works?"

"Yes! yes! beloved father. Surely when it is best thou shalt have them. It is agreed, then? Thou wilt do as we ask?"

"I will, Titus. Nay, more, I thank thee both. I am grateful for your love. I deserve it not. I am careless. I am not fit to be trusted. Yes, I know. I see it sometimes, and then again I forget. Titus, thy father is growing old, but he can still paint. There will be money in thy print-shop. Be it as thou wilt. Take care of the old man, and his art will give ye what it can. Yes, I will do it, but I am sad. My heart is troubled. I have brought trouble to those I love, and, oh! how I myself have suffered."

"I have suffered with thee, and so has Hendrickje; but now will come brighter days. Thou shalt be at peace, and for us all will be comfort and rest. I go directly to Hendrickje and our shop will be ready in a few days. Father, do not sell that glorious picture on the easel there.

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Let us sell it. Let it be the first-fruits of our venture."

"As thou wilt, my son. I have a purchaser for it, and there was another print of Dürer——"

"Nay! father, speak not of that. There was a purchaser, thou saidst?"

"Yes, one of those Jews. I hate them, but they have money."

"Which one father?"

"I care not to say."

"Surely thou dost not mean thou hast again dealt with Lazarus?"

"My son, it is not thy affair. Take the picture, and sell it as best thou canst. I will not tell thee the Jew's name. He will come for the picture soon enough. Curse him! Titus! hold the price high. Belittle not thy father's work. The Jew can pay. Make him pay, and see that thou dost conduct thy business wisely."

"We will do our best, and thou shalt be happy, and all that thou dost need shalt thou have."

"Titus, thou art a noble son, and Hendrickje is a noble woman. Take the picture, then, even now, lest I sell it if the Jew come again."

"That will I do. Farewell, dearest father. I will come again anon, and tell thee how we prosper."

Titus took the picture, and left the studio. He was trembling all over with emotion. It was a fearful thing for a son to be forced to treat his father thus. Yet well knew he it was for the best. He went direct to Hendrickje and told her his story. Their tears fell together as they thought of the helplessness of the great master.

CHAPTER XLVIII

Rembrandt Marries Hendrickje

THUS it went on. Rembrandt chafed a little at first under these new conditions of life. At times he almost burst his bonds when some new print attracted him—but Titus and Hendrickje watched him always. They gave their lives to him. They had resolved that he should be free to paint, and that no further suffering should come to him. It was best. Rembrandt himself came to know at last that there could be no better life for him. Indeed, he thought but little about it. Painting was what he wanted, and he was free to paint. All else was forgotten. Picture after picture, etching after etching was produced, and all went to the art-shop of Titus and Hendrickje, which grew and flourished mightily.

One day Cornelia, the little daughter of Hendrickje, came to the shop. In some way she had escaped from her nurse. Titus was touched at the sight of her. She was a beautiful child, and well did Titus know there was no acknowledged father. Only a little while before there had been sent by the magistrates a public reprimand to Rembrandt and Hendrickje, because of their way of living. Titus had intercepted it. He never

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let his father see it, but this day as he looked on the little Cornelia, he felt that something must be done. The child should not start forth in life with such a stigma on her name.

Titus thought, "Again must I go to my father and reprove him. Oh! God! Thou knowest how I love him—but Hendrickje and Cornelia must not be left thus. It shall not be. Poor father! why should I judge so transcendent a genius. Thou knowest! O Father in Heaven! how I love him—but this can no longer be. It is for his sake as well as theirs that I act. God help thee, Titus! for thou art the son, and he so great a father! Nevertheless, it must be done. I will see him, nor will I tell Hendrickje."

In his unselfish love Titus went again to his father. He found him in the studio where he knew he would find him, engrossed as always in his work. As he entered, Rembrandt started up impatiently. "Who dares interrupt me? I am at the point of finishing a picture."

"It is I, father, thy son."

"Oh, Titus; well, what is it then? Seest thou not I am busy with my work?"

"Yes, father, that I see, and I know how great it is, but there are other things in the world besides painting, even such paintings as thine."

"What other things? What meanest thou, Titus? Is it not enough that I give to thee and to Hendrickje my pictures, and receive from them but a mere pittance, only enough to keep me alive?"

"Nay, father, it is not enough, though I grieve

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to say it. Hast thou thought of Cornelia? She is lovely. Thou art blessed in such a daughter."

"Cornelia! yes, indeed, she is lovely. I am very proud of her."

"Father, if thou art proud of her, thou wilt remove the stigma from her name."

"Stigma! What sayest thou, Titus? She is my daughter, and Hendrickje, the lovely woman, is her mother. Stigma? indeed, I know not what thou meanest."

"Father, pardon me. I know it is not meet for me to talk thus, but surely it is true. Thou didst never marry Hendrickje."

"What has that to do with the matter? She never asked me to marry her. In truth, I thought not of it. She loves me, and I love her. What need of more? Go ask her and see if she wishes a marriage."

"I have asked her. For herself she cares not, but for Cornelia she does care. There should be no stain on the child's name."

"Ah! ah! that is true. If I had thought of anything but my art I should have known of that long ago. My daughter! Yes, and Hendrickje's too! They both are suffering shame because of me. Will never my selfishness let go its hold upon me? What is to be done, Titus?"

"Go with her to the church, father, go at once. Marry her there before the altar—then can there be no shame for her, nor for thee, and none for the lovely little one."

"Titus, thou hast aroused my conscience.

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This should have been done long before. Where is Hendrickje?"

"She is not far off, father."

"Bid her come here. I would speak with her alone."

Titus left and sought Hendrickje. Soon she came, and entered the studio with drooping head.

"Hendrickje," said Rembrandt, "I have done thee a wrong, and I have wronged our daughter."

"Say not that, dear lord; asked I ever for aught but thy love, and that hast thou given me in full measure, nor did I ever deserve it."

"Talk not thus, Hendrickje. There is a wrong, and I am guilty. Thou knowest it, and our daughter is shamed. Titus just told me that. Hendrickje, hast thou a white veil?"

"Yes, my lord, but why askest thou that question?"

"Don it, I pray thee, and make thee ready for the church. I will send for Hendrik, and Titus is already here. We will go to the church, beloved, and be married."

Hendrickje almost fainted from excess of joy; but recovering herself, she came to Rembrandt, and kissed him again and again.

"Thou wilt do that for me? To be the wife of the greatest of masters! Oh! let not my strength fail me, for it is too much." She trembled like an aspen leaf. Rembrandt caressed her—he held her close to his heart. The power of his passion gave her new strength. Soon she went and arranged herself in bridal attire.

Meanwhile, Rembrandt had sent Jan for Hen-

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drik and his wife, and also for Jan Six. They were to witness the marriage.

"What is to say, master? What is it, master? Marriage, didst say? witness? What is it, master? I know not."

"Thou blockhead. Go to Hendrik's. Surely thou knowest his print-shop?"

"Oh! yes, master, I know it well, but what to say?"

"I will tell thee, idiot. Tell Hendrik and his wife, and afterward Jan Six, to come hither directly, for Rembrandt would have them go to the church with him to witness his marriage. Dost understand?"

"Oh, yes, master, I understand, master. Come directly, witness, is that right, master?"

"Yes, stupid, witness what?"

"Witness his—his—marriage, saidst thou, master?"

"I said it. Go now and be quick about it. You might say that Hendrickje is the bride."

"Hendrickje is the bride? I might say! Oh! yes! master. I will say it. I thought she was a bride before. Hendrickje is the bride, thou sayest."

"Go quickly, and say what I have told thee to say, and make no mistake, or it will go ill with thee."

"I go, I go, master." And Jan departed on his errand. Rembrandt sat thinking for a moment or two.

"This should have been done long ago. Now shall all be done in due form as becomes the lovely woman, and the beautiful daughter." And soon he had donned garments suitable for the wed-

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ding ceremony, and was ready to greet Hendrickje as she came blushing from her room. It was not long before Jan Six came, the grave and noble burgomaster.

"I have long wished this, Rembrandt, my dear friend. It is well. I am glad and proud to go with thee to the church."

Soon after came Hendrik and his wife. The worthy print-seller was puffing a little and somewhat red in the face because of his hurry. Nevertheless, he said to Rembrandt, "Right glad am I, cousin. Yes! yes! indeed the time had come! Oh! oh! Hendrik is glad, and thou must etch that dear Cornelia. Give me the print."

"Nay, that can I not do, Cousin Hendrik. I am under bonds. This dear Hendrickje and this son who loves me—they take all I have."

"Yes! yes! I see, and I fear Hendrik will not prosper because he cannot sell Rembrandt's works. But, no matter, it is best so. Let us go to the church. I trust thou hast some refreshment afterward, for I am already athirst, Cousin Rembrandt."

"Hendrik, come hither. There is a moment yet before we go, and thou wilt find a flagon of Rhenish on the table."

Hendrik refreshed himself, and, much comforted, joined the company. They went to the oude kerk, once a cathedral in the days of Alva—now stripped of its ornaments, bereft of its chapels, plain, severe, but still with the grand lines of the columns and the arches. There before the pulpit stood Rembrandt and Hendrickje, and the minister pronounced them man and wife.

CHAPTER XLIX

The Order from the Syndics

NOW came some tranquil days. Rembrandt's art was by no means weakened. On the contrary, it was stronger than ever before. True, he was deserted, left almost solitary, but there were some still who cared for him, and even some pupils still came to seek his instruction. It seemed to him that prosperity had come again, for Titus and Hendrickje sold his pictures, and Titus even went abroad with portfolios of his father's etchings, and sold them where he could.

"My dearest," Rembrandt said one day, "let us take a little house; I know one on the Rosen-gracht. It is a little one, but it is not bad. It is far better than an inn. Surely we can live there in comfort. Can I not paint?"

"My lord, thou canst, and methinks it may be well for us to have a home, for I am tired of the inn, and I do not feel strong. I am weary, and then thou knowest, my lord, that Titus would be wedded."

"Yes! yes! truly, and to Saskia's cousin. Let them be wedded, and we will live together in the little home. My days are numbered. It will not be long."

"Nay, my dear lord, it is my days that are

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numbered. I shall go long before thee. Stay thou and make the world glad with thy masterpieces. Stay as long as thou canst, and lay not down the brush until thy last breath fails thee. Promise me that, my own lord, my king of all painters."

"I promise, but why speak thus? Art thou really ill, dearest Hendrickje?"

"I fear it, but think not of it. Take the house. It is well. Titus will care for thee when I am gone."

"Speak not thus, Hendrickje! Thou, too, shalt live there in peace. Banish these gloomy thoughts. There is no cause for them. Surely there is no cause. Thou art well, Hendrickje, only a little tired perhaps. In the new home will be happiness for thee as well as for me. I go to seek it now. I will close with the offer. We can be happy there, though it is but a little place."

"As thou wilt, my lord. I am always happy with thee."

It was done as Rembrandt had said, and Hendrickje for a little time was mistress of her own home. The dignity and pride, that came from being the head of Rembrandt's household, gave her new strength, and for a time it seemed that her health might be better.

Titus was afterward wedded, and there was much joy in the simple home.

"Hendrickje," said Rembrandt one day, "I have still a friend, even another besides Jan Six. It is Van de Cappelle. Thou knowest the man. What thinkest thou, dearest Hendrickje, that he

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has done for me? Nay, thou couldst not guess. Nor would I have thee guess, for I would fain tell thee. Oh! Hendrickje, he has been to the guild of the cloth drapers, and he has gotten for me there a commission to paint them. Once more a Doelen picture—once more in my last years! It shall be the best of all. Thanks to thee, Hendrickje, there shall be more color in it, but alas! there is one trouble. Those Dutchmen insist upon having each his equal share in the picture. How can I do it? You remember, Hendrickje, the ‘Night-Watch,’ and how offended they were because some did not have the place they thought their due. Now they are providing beforehand against this neglect, and each will have his proper place, nor be eclipsed by any other. Oh! the vanity of them all! How can I do it? Nay, but I will. I will make a picture, nevertheless, and it shall be so glowing in color that none will care for the lack of composition. Yes! and I will give their characters too. Hendrickje, I will paint it. I can paint it, in spite of all their restrictions.”

“Indeed, I know it, my lord; what is there thou couldst not paint? Surely, I believe it will be thy masterpiece, and Hendrickje will live to see it. She could not die until her eyes had feasted on her lord’s greatest work.”

“Oh, talk not thus, Hendrickje. Yet shalt thou see many great works of mine, but this one must I begin at once, for the commission is urgent, and brooks not delay.”

Rembrandt left her, and went direct to the hall

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of the cloth drapers. He was met with dignity, and some little reserve, by their chief. The great painter had been so long out of fashion in Amsterdam that it was almost under protest, despite the urgent solicitations of Van de Cappelle that they had given him the commission.

"Mynheer Rembrandt," said their chief, "you understand, I hope, the conditions under which this picture is to be painted. These gentlemen here, and I, are the chief men of this guild. We are the Syndics, and we wish our portraits that together we may remain here on the walls of our guild hall."

"I see, I know. Yes. How many should there be—those who direct the affairs of the guild? How many are there?"

"There are six of us; I trust that is not too many for an art like yours to do justice to us all on one canvas."

"Nay! nay! Surely I can do that, but have you any special functions? Is there aught associated with your guild life that is more prominent than anything else as the years go on?"

"Now, Mynheer van Ludin, what might it be that is most important in the year?"

"Ah! surely, my chief, it is the casting up of the accounts."

"And how do you do that?" said Rembrandt. "Will you show me the room where you do it and the account-book?"

"Why, yes, but what matters it? We want our portraits!"

"You shall all have your portraits, but why

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not the room too, and the book, and the table on which you place it? Is there a beautiful cloth that you put on the table? Methinks there must be one, since you are so rich."

"A cloth?—indeed! yes," said the chief. "It came from the Indies. It is very beautiful, but what has that to do with the matter? We want our portraits."

"I know. Ye shall have them, but bring me cloth. Show me the room. Bring the account-book."

"This is passing strange, Mynheer painter. I see not what it has to do with the portraits."

"Do as I say, I beg, and let me see you all in the room, where you do what is your hardest thing to do, the casting up of the accounts of the year."

They grumbled a little. One or two of them thought: "Something like the 'Night-Watch' might happen here, and we will have none of that." Nevertheless, the dominating spirit of the painter prevailed, and presently he was led to the private room of the guild's officers. The big account-book was brought out. The splendid Indian cloth was put upon the table, and almost instinctively these thrifty burghers gathered about it.

"I have it," said Rembrandt. "Let me paint. Stay where you are, I will sketch now. Later will I complete the portrait of each." The astonished burghers stayed just where they were. It was like Peter and Geertje on the barge. Their pictures were taken before they knew it, though

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they were only sketched, and to be developed later.

"I thank you, oh! how heartily I thank you. The picture shall be painted. Come kindly to my studio, one at a time, and now that I have the composition and the color, be sure each and all shall have his due place in the finished work."

One by one came the leaders of the cloth guild. One by one each lived upon the canvas. Sometimes one came with another, and looked with wonder on the vivid presentment both of his own form and face, and that of his comrades.

"It is a marvel, Wilhelm. I see not how he has the life of all of us; yet he has."

"It is true, Hans."

"What were you saying, my friends?" said Rembrandt. "Wait till you see the color of the cloth, and the light from the window up yonder. I mean to paint you a picture, but you shall all live in it."

"Yea, that is true. Never was Hans more like himself than he is there."

"Not more like than thou art, friend Wilhelm. Why, it is thy very self."

"I thank you for your kind words. Now let the others come. Then must I study once more the cloth in the light of that little room, and soon your guild picture will be done."

Rembrandt went back to his studio. He opened a window through which streamed the sunlight. He took not the cloth he had seen in the guild rooms, but another that Hendrickje had saved for him from the wreck of the auction. He

THE ORDER FROM THE SYNDICS

put it in the streaming sunlight. The reds and the golds came out. How splendid! Whence this splendor of color? It was not in the earlier pictures. Now this was like a picture from the Orient, save for the grave garb of the Syndics, only black and white, but so irradiated by the surroundings that it seemed almost brilliant.

CHAPTER L

The Last Days of Hendrickje

THE picture was finished and the Syndics liked it. Before they came to take it away Rembrandt took it to Hendrickje's room. She was now confined to her bed, and daily growing weaker. Even Rembrandt, absorbed as he was in his art, could not fail to see that her strength was nearly gone. Still she might linger for awhile. Perhaps the picture would give her new strength. Who could tell?

Rembrandt placed the painting on the arms of a high-backed, carved chair in such a way that the light would fall across it from the window, in the same way as it did when he painted it. Hendrickje started up from her pillow as one inspired. "Oh! my lord, what hast thou done? Surely never hast thou equalled that! Oh! the glory of the color! I thank God that I have lived to see it." Long did Hendrickje feast her eyes upon the magnificent work. Its golden glow seemed to her almost like the opening of heaven's gates. And then there was the life of the men to be kept there forever on the canvas. It seemed almost like an immortality. Exhausted at last by emotion, she sank back again among the pillows, murmuring, "Ah! so has the immortal master

THE LAST DAYS OF HENDRICKJE

painted me again and again! Hendrickje will not be forgotten. Hendrickje is the master's wife. What higher lot could be? I shall die content. No woman has been honored as has been the poor peasant girl from Zealand. But I am sorry to leave my lord alone. Oh! what will he do? He brooks not loneliness. Nay! but the art is always with him. That will sustain him. I wonder where is Albrecht? He should come now and comfort his friend. He is too selfish in his happiness." Then aloud :

"Rembrandt, my lord, the picture is glorious. It is thy best, and Hendrickje has lived to see it. Send now for a notary, for I would make my will, and Rembrandt, my own dearest, best beloved, since I must leave thee, write, I beg, to Albrecht, and bid him come hither with his beauteous lady, that thou mayest have companionship, for it is not well for thee to be alone."

"What meanest thou, Hendrickje? Surely thou art better now. Indeed, thou wilt not leave me."

"No, not yet, but send for the notary, and write to Albrecht, I beg of thee."

Rembrandt, half-dreaming, for the thought of the Syndics was still upon him, did as Hendrickje had asked. The will was made. Cornelia was cared for, and so was Titus, and Rembrandt. He was made the guardian of both.

"Write as I tell thee, beloved," said Hendrickje.

"I am but little accustomed to writing, my own, but I will obey thee."

"Write thus, then, if thou hast thy writing-tablet there."

REMBRANDT

"I have it. What wouldst thou have me say?"

"This. 'Come to me, dear Albrecht, and bring with thee Hildegarde, for I am lonely, and I would have thee with me.'"

"Nay, dearest, I cannot write that now. I cannot see to write such words."

"But that must thou write, for it will be long ere the letter comes to him, and when it does come, Hendrickje will not be here. I know it."

"I will write as thou sayest, but thou dost torture me. I cannot be thus, my love. Thou shalt not go."

"Nay, but I must. Write more. Tell him to come and stay with thee, and help on with thy great work. Say this, 'Albrecht, thou hast always been my friend; I need thee now, for I am alone. Surely thou hast not forgotten thy friend, and now he needs thee.'"

Rembrandt put down the words as Hendrickje spoke them. When the letter was finished she rallied somewhat—indeed, it seemed for awhile that she might even regain her strength. Rembrandt kept back the letter. He sent it not in the hope that it might not be needed; but as the weeks passed on, it became only too clear that Hendrickje's days were numbered. At last she passed away peacefully, saying, "I have loved thee, my lord, and thou hast honored me with thy love. I have asked no more in this world. May the good Lord have mercy on me, and take me to Himself!"

Thus did she pass away. Rembrandt was stunned. Even Titus was unable to comfort him.

THE LAST DAYS OF HENDRICKJE

Nor did Titus stay long with him. He, too, was called away, and the old painter was left solitary in his home. Hardly was there a friend to give him a word of cheer, yet still he painted. Naught else could he do. The passion for art was still upon him. No grief, no triumph could make that hand tremble. There was no tragedy that could dim the sight of that eye, that had seen so deeply into human character. He painted, and he kept on painting, but at last the letter was sent to Albrecht. In beautiful Nuremberg, Albrecht and Hildegarde had long been living in one of those quaint houses with high gables and many stories in what seemed the roof. Happy had they been. Children had come to them, beautiful blond Germans. Hildegarde thought each one of them would be an artist. Albrecht did not paint, though Hildegarde always told him that he could. "Nay," he said, "I have seen Rembrandt paint. After that I could never touch a brush. He is the master of us all."

"Nay, but, Albrecht, why dost thou not try? I know thou canst do great things."

"That is thy fondness, beloved. There is one thing I would do. I would see the master again. Wilt thou go with me to Amsterdam?"

"Gladly will I go, if thou dost wish it."

"I wonder much I have no word from Rembrandt. My heart misgives me about him. Has there been no letter, dearest?"

"Nay, I should have given it to thee."

"Yes, truly, but it is strange. We will wait yet a little and if I have no word from him, surely

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will I go to Amsterdam, and thou shalt go with me. Once before, dost thou remember? I did dream about him when he was in trouble, and my dream came true. Dost remember, my own?"

"Ah! yes, that was when they sold his house and his pictures."

"Indeed, it was. The same feeling is upon me now—not this time a dream, but I am sure Rembrandt will call for me and for thee. There will be a letter."

The letter that Hendrickje had told Rembrandt to write came a few days later.

"What said I, dearest Hildegarde? I knew the master was in trouble. Let us go at once."

CHAPTER LI

The Death of Rembrandt

IT was a long journey from Nuremberg to Amsterdam, and in those troublous days it was not without its perils. Nevertheless, Albrecht and Hildegarde came at last to the great city of the Low Countries, and at once they sought Rembrandt. It was hard to find him. So friendless and alone was he that few knew where he dwelt. But Hildegarde remembered again Jan Six, and they went to the burgomaster's house and there found where Rembrandt was now living. Jan Six said to them: "I fear the master is in great trouble. Sometimes I go to see him. He is alone. Would I could see him more often, but my duties forbid. Sometimes I fear some harm may come to him. It is not well for such a man to be alone—so great a man—the greatest of all our painters."

"True, indeed," said Albrecht. "We will go to him directly. In the Rosengracht, thou sayest?"

"Yes, friend, it is there that he lives."

Then Albrecht and Hildegarde took their way to the last home of Rembrandt.

That afternoon the painter had been inspired more than ever before. "What is this golden glory—what means it? Is Saskia there? Ah!

REMBRANDT

yes, I see her face! Lovely Saskia! Beloved! thou didst all for me. Thou gavest all and what did I give? Ah! there is the golden glory again! What is that? Hendrickje? and didst thou too give all for me? It is true. I must paint it. Oh! the golden glory! It is of this world or the other? I know not. Let me paint."

He seized his palette and his brush and went to the easel. "What shall I paint? Ah! I see! I have only painted people as they live here. Let me paint Saskia in the other world! There is another world. I will paint Hendrickje there too. Both will I paint! Oh! the nobleness, the purity, the greatness! Rembrandt! thou hast never painted that! An artist thou art, yes, but why not have painted the greatness of these souls that have lived beside thee? I will paint it. I will. I have sought this life only. Oh! God! grant something of the other! I see it now ere I go hence—but it is too late, oh! I fear it is too late. Oh! why thought I not of the heavenly before? My art would have been better. I will paint now. Surely I see it. Saskia is there. Hendrickje is there. Titus is there. Let me paint. Oh! let me paint. Whence comes that glory? Surely never saw I light like that on earth. I cannot paint it. Oh! God, why cannot I paint it? Let me die then. I would paint them in their glory, but my art fails me. Nay, rather would I join them. I have failed. I thought that art could do all, but how paint Saskia in that pure light? I see it. I cannot paint it. I cannot paint—Rembrandt! thou canst not paint—what

THE DEATH OF REMBRANDT

has come?—what?—what? not paint?—where is my brush? Let me try again! Cannot paint? Nay! it is true, but who could paint that vision? I will try once more.” Rembrandt arose and went toward the canvas, brush in hand, intent upon the portrayal of the vision he had seen. He did not reach the canvas, but fell backward, brush and palette in hand, and lay prone upon the floor—dead.

It was but a little time after, when Albrecht and Hildegarde came to the studio and asked for the master.

“He is above, yonder,” said the servant.

They went up and opened the door after knocking vainly.

There lay the master before the easel on which stood the half-finished picture full of a mystery, and a glory not known before in Rembrandt’s work.

Both Albrecht and Hildegarde started back in horror.

“Surely! surely! it cannot be that he is dead, Hildegarde. He! the painter of life? Let me see, I will go to him.”

Albrecht went and put his hand upon the heart. It had long been still. The hands were icy cold.

“Oh! Albrecht! he is dead. Surely thou couldst see that!”

“Yes, but I could not believe him dead, and with his brush and his palette in his hands! What thinkest thou he was trying to paint, Hildegarde, for there is the canvas on which he was working but a little while ago?”

REMBRANDT

“I know not, but perhaps it was the glow of heaven. It would seem to me that he was seeking there the forms of those he loved, and would surround them with such glory as his art could give.”

“It is true, Hildegarde. The great master has died in the attempt to paint the very glory of heaven itself.”

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